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THE

WORKS

OF

THE REV. JOSEPH BELLAMY, D. D.

LATE OF BETHLEM, CONNECTICUT.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE LAW OUR SCHOOL-MASTER.

GALATIANS III. 24.

Wherefore the law was our School-Master to bring us unto CHRIST, *that we might be justified by faith.*

THE chief design of the present discourse is to give the true sense of this text; which will go far towards leading us into the nature of the Jewish religion, and of the Christian; and help to remove several dangerous mistakes, which mankind have been apt to run into. Now, in order to understand any text of Scripture, we are to consider the various circumstances of the discourse; such as the character of the persons spoken to, the manner how the text is introduced, and for what purpose; that we, seeing the occasion of what is written, and the scope and design of the inspired writer, may the more readily and certainly discern the true sense of the passage. Here, therefore, let us inquire into the character of the persons St. Paul had to deal with; the occasion and design of these words, and how they were introduced in the thread of his argument; and the grounds he saw in the nature of the Mosaic dispensation for this observation, that *the law was a school-master to bring us to Christ.*

I. As to the character of the persons St. Paul had to deal with. They, at least the ring-leaders of them, were by birth Jews, by education Pharisees, and now lately converted to Christianity; but yet zealous for some of their old pharisaical notions, fond of making proselytes to their own scheme, a scheme, in the apostle's opinion, subversive of Christianity.

While of the sect of the Pharisees, before their conversion to Christianity, they expected justification wholly by the deeds of the law. (Rom. x. 3.) But now, since their conversion to Christianity, they expected justification by the deeds of the law; and yet it seems not wholly; for they

hoped that Christ would profit them some, be of some effect, and they had some dependence on grace, as is implied in the apostle's manner of reasoning in *Gal.* v. 2, 3, 4. As to their notions of the law of Moses, by which they expected justification, it seems they considered it, not at all as a dispensation preparatory to Christianity, suited to show them their need of Christ, and to lead them to faith in him by types and shadows; but only as a rule of life, to which, if they conformed, they should be saved. And it seems they did not doubt, but that such a conformity to it as they were capable of, would answer the end. Little considering, that if they depended upon their circumcision, and their other works for life, they were obliged to keep the whole law. Just as, now-a-days, there are those who ignorantly imagine, that if they endeavour to do as well as they can, they shall be saved; little thinking, that if they depend upon their own righteousness for salvation, they ought to yield a perfect obedience, as they would not finally be disappointed.

Had they viewed the law of Moses as a dispensation preparatory to Christianity, they might more readily have seen the propriety of its being abolished, and giving place to the Gospel of Christ; but while they considered it, with all its rites and ceremonies, only as a rule to which they were to conform, as a condition of salvation, Christ only making up for their deficiencies, it was natural to think it of perpetual obligation; and that not only to themselves, but also to the Gentile converts. When therefore they observed St. Paul constantly preaching *justification by faith alone without the deeds of the law*, and the Gentile converts received, and embraced as good Christians, without their paying any regard to the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law, they were chagrined, and set up themselves to oppose St. Paul, affirming, "that unless the Gentile converts were circumcised and kept the law of Moses, they could not be saved." Acts xv. 1. 5.

And as the Jews were, in those early times, the greatest enemies Christianity had, and the most bitter persecutors, enraged to see the rites of Moses' law neglected; so these *Pharisaical* Christians, by their zeal for Moses' law, ingrati-

ated themselves very much in the favour of these bitter enemies of Christianity, which made them the more zealous in their way, that they might not only avoid persecution from the unbelieving Jews, but also have it to glory in, that they had proselyted so many Gentiles to be circumcised. Gal. vi. 12, 13. So that they were not only bigoted to their scheme by their education while Jews, and attached to it, as it suited their self-righteous temper; but also proud of it, as it freed them from the chief odium of Christianity, and screened them from the malice of its bitterest enemies. And they were in some places more than a match for St. Paul, with all his extraordinary gifts. They raised such a dust at *Antioch*, as that Paul and Barnabas could not settle the point; but were obliged to refer it to the apostles at Jerusalem. And they made such sad work in the churches in Galatia, that although the converts there once could have even *plucked out their eyes*, and given to St. Paul, yet they were now much disaffected towards him, and even become his enemies. And these seducers were in eminent danger of even overthrowing Christianity in all that country; which at last obliged St. Paul to write this *Epistle* to the several churches in Galatia.

II. Now, these were the men the apostle had to deal with; and the method he took, which was wisely adapted to let in light upon their minds and thoroughly convince their judgments, may be fully seen, if we carefully read through this epistle: but I may now only give you a brief and cursory view of some parts of it, just to let you see his manner of address, and his way of reasoning, and how our text is introduced in the thread of the apostle's argument. Which take as follows:

"This epistle is sent to the churches of Galatia, from Paul, an apostle, who received his mission not of men, neither by men, but immediately from Jesus Christ.; and it is approved by all the brethren with him, and it comes wishing you all blessings. But I am astonished and greatly marvel, after all the pains I have taken with you to instruct you into the true nature of Christianity, to see you so soon drawn away by these seducers, to quite another kind of a Gospel; which indeed is no Gospel; but is a most dangerous scheme.

These seducers, how plausible soever they appear, ought not to be regarded. Yea, if an angel from heaven should preach any other Gospel, than that I have preached, let him be ACCURSED. I speak plainly; for I am no TRIMMER. I do not make it my ultimate end to please man; but mean, in the uprightness of my heart, to be faithful to Jesus Christ. And I know I received the Gospel I preached to you by immediate revelation from God, after, as it was publicly known, I had been exceedingly zealous in the Pharisaical scheme; being met with in a very extraordinary manner, as I was going to Damascus. Ever since which time I have constantly preached this Gospel; being instructed not even by any of the Apostles, but by immediate revelation. And I have constantly maintained, that the Gentiles need not be circumcised, or keep the law of Moses; and that no man is justified by the deeds of the law, but only by faith in Christ, &c. Chapters i. and ii.

"Not that I countenance licentiousness. For at the same time, that I through the law am dead to all hopes of justification by the law, I am but hereby prepared to live with a single eye to the glory of God: still having all my hopes of acceptance founded on Christ. And indeed I could not consistently preach up justification by the law. For if I did, I should quite overthrow the Gospel. For if righteousness and justification come by the law, and is to be obtained by our own works, then there was no need of Christ. But he is dead in vain. Chap. ix. 17. 21.

"O foolish, infatuated Galatians, may I not appeal even to your own experience? Cannot you recollect that an extraordinary out-pouring of the Spirit, in his miraculous gifts, has attended the preaching of the doctrines of grace, and not of the Pharisaical scheme, as in all the churches, so also among you? And is not this a sufficient confirmation that they are from God? And were not even you yourselves, converted to Christianity by these doctrines, attended with a divine influence? And can you think to perfect yourselves now by going off from this spiritual, divine scheme, to one so mean and low? Chap. iii. 1—5.

"And this indeed is not any new doctrine. It is the old way of justification. Your father Abraham was, two thousand years ago, justified in this way. And in this way all his children are justified." Ver. 6—9.

Besides, you cannot be justified by the law, if you are ever so desirous of it. All your hopes are built upon ignorant and mistaken notions. For it is evident that the law requires sinless perfection under the severest penalty. Therefore, so far from being justified will you be, if you adhere to this way of justification, that every man of you, who does so, will inevitably fall under the curse. For it is expressly written, *cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* Ver. 10. And therefore see you remember, that if you are circumcised, and intend to be saved by the law, that you yield a sinless perfection. For I, Paul, assure every man of you that is circumcised under that notion, that he is a debtor to keep the whole law; he is bound to yield a perfect obedience, as he hopes to be saved. For if you go this way to obtain justification, I assure you, whatever you think, Christ will profit you nothing. You shall, however, you may flatter yourselves, have no benefit from him. But must stand, or fall, as you yield a perfect obedience, or not." Chap. v. 2, 3, 4 [a].

a An *Arminian* might justly query—Why did not the *Galatians* reply to St. Paul, and say, "Sir, you quite abuse us, we have no notion of being justified by law in your sense. We only depend upon our sincere obedience, and hope and expect to receive some benefit from Christ, and free grace, as you are sensible. We are, in the main, exactly of your mind. The dispute is only about words. We mean the same thing you do. For when you say, *that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law,* you only mean that he is justified by *sincere obedience,* and not by *perfect.* And this is just the thing we would. And you yourself know we do not pretend to perfect obedience. Why then do you bear down so very hard upon us? And even pronounce the man ACCURSED, that teaches our scheme? Pretending that it is so essentially different from yours. We think we obey God in being circumcised, and observing the rites of Moses' law. And you think you obey God in not doing these things. We own we have been too uncharitable in thinking none could be saved, unless they were circumcised and kept the law of Moses. But if this is all the error we are in, you are full as uncharitable towards us, to doom us to destruction for such a mistake. Therefore, being now willing to give up this one point as for all the rest, we think your own words will equally suit us both. Rom. xiv. 3, 4. *Let not him that*

"And if to all this you should object, and say, *And what was the law given for, if we are not to be justified by it?* I reply, it was given to answer many wise ends; as for instance, to check and restrain vice. Chap. iii. 19. But especially to be a school-master, to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. For by the law all sin was forbid under the highest penalty. And so by it we were shut up under sin and condemnation, and shut up to the faith. There was no way to escape the curse, but by faith. All other ways were shut up. And thus the law was to teach us our need of Christ and free grace, and to bring us to look this way for justification and eternal life." Ver. 22, 23, 24. And thus we see the occasion of the words, and how they were introduced in the thread of the apostle's argument.

III. And now, that we may more fully understand them, let us turn back to the sacred books of Moses, and take a view of the law given on Mount Sanai, that we may see what foundation there was in that dispensation, for this observation of the inspired apostle.

Let us begin with the 19th Chapter of Exodus, and see the particular steps divine wisdom took to introduce that dispensation, after that God had already in general prepared the way for it, by redeeming the children of Israel out of Egypt, by an out-stretched hand, by signs and wonders, and led them through the Red sea. Two months they had now been in

eateth despise him that eateth not. And let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? For as to the terms of justification, that one mistake excepted, we are exactly of your mind."

And had St. Paul been in the same scheme with our modern Arminians, I do not see how he could have answered them: being obliged to own, as he would have been, that their notions about justification were right in the main, although he had condemned them by wholesale.

But if St. Paul denied justification by any kind of obedience short of absolute perfection, how sincere soever it might be, as it is plain he did; then there was no room for the Galatians to make this reply to his manner of arguing. Nor is there any more room for the Arminian way of justification by sincere obedience, consistent with the apostle's way of reasoning.—For if they will be justified by their obedience, Christ will profit them nothing, will make up for none of their defects. They therefore must yield a perfect obedience, or fall under the curse; but they do not yield a perfect obedience. As many therefore as are not only in head, but in heart, in the Arminian scheme, are under the CURSE, according to St. Paul. Gal. iii. 10.

the wilderness, (miraculously supplied were they with water out of the flinty rock, and with bread from heaven,) when they came to the mount of God, and all to teach them, that the God of Abraham was the MOST HIGH GOD; and to make them sensible that they were under the greatest and strongest obligations to him.

Israel pitched in the wilderness of Sinai, and there they camped before the mount. And that it might be seen whether they would receive his law, God called unto Moses out of the mountain, and sent him to the house of Jacob, and bid him tell the children of Israel, "ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure to me above all people. For all the earth is mine." To which the children of Israel made answer, "All that the Lord hath spoken will we do." "And Moses told the words of the people unto the Lord." And the Lord sent him to sanctify the people that day, and the next, that they might be ready against the third day, when he would come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai.—"And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, so that all the people that was in the camp trembled." Upon which "Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God. And Mount Sinai," to look to, "was altogether on a smoke. And the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace. And the whole mount quaked greatly. And the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder." Exod. xix. "And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like DEVOURING FIRE on the top of the Mount, in the eyes of the children of Israel." Chap. xxiv. 17. And all this, to fill the hearts of the whole congregation with a sense of the greatness and majesty of God, and their infinite obligations to be obedient.

Now from the mountain, with all these solemn and awful things attending, God gave forth his law, with a voice so exceeding loud, as to be heard by the whole congregation, containing perhaps near three millions of souls. Which filled

the whole congregation with so great terror, that they besought that God would not speak any further to them in this awful manner, lest they should die under it. Chap. xx. 18, 19.

"And God spake all these words, saying,

"I AM THE LORD THY GOD, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image," &c.

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," &c.

"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," &c. &c. &c.

Even ten Commandments.

The sum of all which was, "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; and thy neighbour as thyself."

And it was charged upon the children of Israel, when they had passed over Jordan, that they should stand, part on Mount Gerizzim, and part on Mount Ebal; and that the Levites should say, "CURSED be the man that maketh any graven, or molten image," &c. "And all the people shall say, AMEN." And the CURSE was to be repeated twelve times, according to the number of the twelve tribes of Israel, and all the people were to say, Amen. And to sum up the whole, the Levites were to say, "CURSED be the man that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them." (Or, according to St. Paul, "that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.") "And all the people shall say, Amen." Thus the law, as requiring sinless perfection under the penalty of the CURSE, was, in this public manner, and with the utmost solemnity, to be approved by the whole congregation, as holy, just, and good. *And all the people shall say, AMEN.* Deut. xxvii.

In case of any transgression, the only way provided and prescribed to obtain pardon, was by *shedding of blood.* And *without shedding of blood there was no remission* [b]. The transgressor was to bring a bullock for a sin-offering to the

b Heb. ix. 22.

tabernacle, and present it before the Lord; and having laid his hands on the head of the bullock, the priest was to slay him, sprinkle the blood, burn the bullock, and so make an atonement for the sin. And in this way it should be forgiven [c].

Once in every year, on the great day of atonement, the *High-Priest*, dressed in his holy robes, with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel on his heart, and with the blood of atonement in his hands, was to enter into the *most holy place*, even into the immediate presence of God, who dwelt there, over the mercy-seat, in the cloud of glory, to make atonement for the whole congregation. After which, on the same solemn day, the High-Priest was to lay both his hands on the head of a live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and then send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: and the goat was to bear upon him all their iniquities, unto a land not inhabited [d].

And thus the law, by its requiring perfect obedience, and denouncing a CURSE for the least failing, discovered the necessity of an atonement. And thus the law by its sin-offerings, and its blood of atonement, and its scape-goat, pointed out Christ. And thus the law was in its nature suited to be a school-master to bring them to Christ, that they might be justified by faith.

IV. But that this point may stand in the clearest light, and the justness of the apostle's observation be seen in the plainest manner, these following particulars may be distinctly noted and illustrated:

1. "That the law given on Mount Sinai required sinless perfection of the whole congregation of Israel." If sinless perfection be defined to be "a feeling and acting towards intelligent beings, as being what they are," this their law required. For it required them "to love God with all their heart, and obey him in every thing; and to love their neighbours as themselves, and to do as they would be done by." Which would have been to feel and act towards God and their neighbours as being just what they were. Or, if sinless

c Lev. iv. d Lev. xvi.

perfection consists in always doing that "which is right, and fit, and beautiful to be done, all things considered;" still it comes to the same thing. To love God with all our heart, and obey him in every thing; and to love our neighbours as ourselves, and do as we would by done by, is the sum of what is to be done by us, "as right, and fit, and beautiful." Or, if sinless perfection consists in a perfect conformity of heart and life to the will and law of God," this was plainly required. For it is essential to every law, to require an exact, and entire conformity to itself. And it is a plain contradiction to suppose that God did not require them to do *all* that he did require them to do. They were always to obey God, and never to disobey him. And the law respected their hearts and lives, their thoughts, words, and actions; all their inward tempers, and all their outward behaviour. And it was never lawful for them to commit the least sin, or to omit the least duty; but as to all things written in the book of the law, they were to do them. And,

2. "This perfect obedience was the condition upon which the law promised life." "Ye shall keep my statutes, and my judgments, which if a man do, *he shall live in them.*" Lev. xviii. 5. This is repeated four times more in the Old Testament; once in Neh. ix. 29. thrice in Ezek. xx. 11. 13. 21. And twice in the New Testament; once in Rom. x. 5. and once in Gal. iii. 12.

And that this *life*, thus promised in Moses' law upon condition of perfect obedience, implied in it ETERNAL LIFE and happiness, is evident from the testimony of our blessed Saviour, in Luke x. 25. 28. "What shall I do to inherit ETERNAL LIFE?" said a certain Jew to Christ. To whom our Saviour replied, turning him back to the law of Moses, with these questions, "what is written in the law? How readest thou?" To which the man answered and said, "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself." This he gives as the sum of Moses' law. To which our Saviour replied, "Thou hast answered right. *This do, and thou shalt live;*" i. e. inherit ETERNAL LIFE. The same reply our Saviour made to an-

other man, who also came to him, to know *what he should do that he might have* ETERNAL LIFE. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments," said our blessed Saviour. Matt. xix. 16, 17. It is plain, that in both these passages, our Saviour means to declare how *eternal life* was to be obtained by the law. And he gives the same answer that Moses had done before. *Which, if a man do he shall live in them.* So that, according to our Saviour's interpretation of the law of Moses, ETERNAL LIFE was implied in the *life* therein promised.

This also is plain from the testimony of St. Paul, in Rom. x.; where, opposing the way to justification and eternal life by the law, to that which is by the Gospel, and showing the difference, he says, ver. 5. "Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man that doth those things shall live by them." And then adds, ver. 6. "that the righteousness which is by faith speaketh on this wise, &c. &c. He that believeth shall be saved." Ver. 9, 10. compared with Gal. iii. 12.: where he intimates that the law does not promise justification to faith, but to perfect obedience; plainly taking it for granted, that the life promised in the law implied ETERNAL LIFE. I have insisted the longer on this, because, if the life promised in Moses' law implied eternal life, no doubt, the death threatened, implied eternal death: which seems to be the meaning of Rom. vi. 23. "the wages," (i. e. according to law,) "of sin is death." i. e. Eternal death and misery. Even as "the gift of God is eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ." Therefore I may venture to affirm,

3. "That the CURSE threatened in Moses' law against the man that broke it in any one point, implied in it ETERNAL DAMNATION, and that without any abatements made on account of their inability."

How great their impotency was, whether from their native corruption, or from their contracted bad habits, I shall not pretend now to determine. But, as they were descendants of Adam, and had been educated in Egypt; so, I suppose, they were, at least, as bad as the generality of mankind. But be it so, they were ever so bad, ever so disinclined to yield this perfect obedience in heart and life, yet the law is not

brought down to their vitiated taste, and corrupt hearts; but they are still required to love God with all their hearts, and obey him in every thing, under the penalty of the curse.

Now that the law did curse every one, who continued not in all things written in the book of the law to do them, is plain, from Deut. xxvii.; and that this curse comprised the sum total of the punishment due to sin, according to the law, there is no doubt. And that ETERNAL DAMNATION was implied in the punishment threatened in the law, and comprised in the curse in Deut. xxvii. I think is evident.

For otherwise the wicked Jews, who died in their sins, were not exposed to hell. But we see they were exposed to hell, from the representation Christ gives in his parable of the rich man and Lazarus. "The rich man died and was buried, and in HELL he lift up his eyes being in torments." Luke xvi. 22, 23. This parable was spoken to the Jews then under Moses' law. But they could not have been exposed to hell, unless it were by their own law; for St. Paul expressly affirms, that they should be judged by that, and by no other. "As many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law[e]." And therefore, if their law had not threatened hell, they would not have been exposed unto it.

Besides if the Jews, who enjoyed the benefit of divine revelation, were not exposed to hell for their sins, it is not to be supposed that the benighted Gentiles were. And if neither Jew nor Gentile were in danger of hell, previous to the coming of Christ, why did Christ come, and die, to save both *Jew and Gentile from the wrath to come*[f].

Indeed it is plain from the three first chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, that St. Paul takes it for granted, as an indisputable point, that the Jews by their law, as well as the Gentiles by the law of nature, were exposed to the wrath of God for the least sin[g]: and that this wrath should be revealed and executed at the day of judgment[h]; when, as we know, the wicked of all nations are to go away into everlasting punishment[i]. So that if the New Testament may be allowed to explain the Old, there can be no doubt but eternal damnation

e Rom. ii. 12. *f* 1 Thes. i. 10. *g* Rom. i. 18.
h Chap. ii. 5, 6. *i* Matt. xxv. 46.

was implied in the curse of Moses' law. And every unbiassed reader will naturally view that passage in *Gal.* iii. 10. 13. in this light. "As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse. For it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them. But Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, that the blessing of Abraham might come upon us." For as the blessing of Abraham implied eternal life and happiness; so the curse of the law from which Christ redeemed us, implied eternal death and misery; as St. Paul viewed the case [k]. So that, as the law required sinless perfection of the whole congregation of Israel, and promised eternal life upon

k OBJ. "Grant it, when St. Paul says, *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law*, that by the curse he means *eternal damnation*; and by *the law*, he means *the law of Moses*: yet how could St. Paul justly give *this sense* to the *curse* of Moses' law, which seems to intend nothing more than *temporal judgments?* As it is written, Deut. xxviii. 16, 17. *Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket, and thy store.* And so on for above *fifty verses* together, without one word of *eternal damnation.*"

ANS. God designed the whole Jewish dispensation as a SHADOW of spiritual things.—Their bondage in Egypt was a shadow of our spiritual bondage; their redemption out of Egypt, a shadow of our redemption by Christ. The land of Canaan, with all the milk and honey, a shadow of heaven and its eternal delights and joys. Their being turned out of the land of Canaan for their sins, and cursed in all their temporal interests, a shadow of an eternal banishment from heaven, and of the everlasting miseries of hell: so that the curse of Moses' law was, in its *spiritual meaning*, of the same import with the curse that shall be executed at the last day; when the judge shall say, "Depart from me, ye CURSED, into everlasting fire." Mat. xxv. 41. And accordingly, St. Paul understood it so. This is the true solution of the difficulty. And it must be quite satisfactory to those who believe, that the Jewish dispensation was by God designed to be a shadow of spiritual things. For this being supposed, and taken for granted, as indeed it is every where in the New Testament, St. Paul might be full as certain what was the *spiritual*, as what was the *literal* sense. Nor was this *spiritual sense* designed to be wholly hid from the whole congregation of Israel, as the learned Dr. Warburton seems to imagine; (vid. Div. Leg. Mos.) but rather, we ought to think, God designed to give them some general idea of the substance by all those shadows which were held forth before their eyes, (and in which *the Gospel was preached to them*: Heb. iv. 2.) because otherwise these shadows would have been of no service to lead them to look to the promised Messiah, who was to come: and so the end for which they were appointed, would have been frustrated. They were, therefore, not designed to *secrete*, but to *reveal* spiritual things: not indeed *clearly*, but yet to give a *shadow of them*: and such a *shadow*, as was well suited to lead their minds to the *substance*; as might be largely shown. Particularly,

that condition; so it threatened eternal death and misery for the least failing: and that, all their inability notwithstanding. Therefore,

4. "By the deeds of the law no flesh could be justified in the sight of God [l]." But every Jew, whose conscience was thoroughly awakened, would by experience find, that the law which was ordained to life, which promised life upon perfect obedience, did sentence him to death [m]. Indeed if the law could have given life, then men might have been justified this way [n]. And so the death of Christ had been needless; for if *righteousness might have come by the law, then Christ had died in vain* [o]. *But the law was weak through the flesh,* unable to give life by reason of human depravity [p]. It could convince of sin [q] if conscience was before ever so stupid, and men's false hopes ever so high and strong; yet if the commandment was set home, it could cause sin to revive, and all their false hopes to die [r]. And it could work wrath, and fill the guilty creature with terror [s]; for it *shut him up under sin* [t], and bound him over to eternal condemnation [u], and so was to him a ministration of death [x]. But it was impossible he

all the *curses* written in their law against the sinner, were designed and suited, not to *hide* and *secrete* the *wrath of God,* but to reveal and realize it to the heart. And while the guilty Jew died sensibly under the *wrath of God,* and *curse of the law,* he could have a prospect of nothing but a miserable eternity, nor expect any thing short of *eternal damnation;* i. e. to continue for ever under the *wrath of God,* an *accursed* creature. But whether every reader shall think *this* the true solution of the difficulty mentioned in the *objection* or not, yet this is plain, that by the *curse,* the apostle means that *eternal misery from which Christ redeems sinners:* and by the *law,* he means *the law of Moses,* of which he had been speaking, and out of which he had quoted the passage he refers unto, when he says, *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law.* Read Gal. iii. 10. and compare it with Deut. xxvii. 26. and you may see, it is as evident as it can be, that he is speaking of the *curse of Moses' law.* Wherefore Dr. Doddridge's Note on Gal. iii. 13. is not satisfactory. But to conclude, if the *life* promised in the law of Moses, implied *eternal life,* as it is certain, from our Saviour, that it did; then, according to the same rule of interpretation, the death threatened must imply *eternal misery;* as we see it did according to St. Paul. And no doubt that interpretation of the law of Moses must be right, which is thus confirmed by two such *divine expositors.*

l Rom. iii. 20. *m* Rom. vii. 10. *n* Gal. iii. 21. *o* Gal. ii. 21.
p Rom. viii. 3. *q* Rom. iii. 20. *r* Rom. vii. 9. *s* Rom. iv. 15.
t Gal. iii. 22. *u* Gal. iii. 10. *x* 2 Cor. iii. 7.

should ever obtain the favour of God and eternal life this way. For neither his circumcision, nor any of his duties, would profit him, unless he *kept the whole law*[y]. He was a debtor, he was bound *to keep the whole law*[z], in order to life. Therefore the Jew was properly shut up under sin, guilt, and condemnation, and bound over to eternal wrath, nor was there any other way to obtain pardon, but by *shedding of blood*[a]. But *the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin*[b]. Therefore the Jew was shut up from all other ways, and driven to an absolute necessity to look to the promised Messiah, that he might be justified by faith in him. And thus the law was so constituted, as to be adapted not to give life, but to be a school-master to bring them to Christ, that they might be justified by faith. Which will still further appear, if we consider,

5. "That the whole congregation of Israel were obliged, even in the sight of God, who searcheth the heart, to approve of the law, in all its rigour, as strictly just." For in the most public and solemn manner, all the congregation of Israel, when the curse was denounced twelve times going from Mount Ebal, were twelve times to answer, and say, AMEN[c]. And this was to be in the sight of God their Law-giver, who looks at the heart; and who would esteem their saying, Amen, a mere mockery, unless their hearts approved of it at the same time their lips pronounced Amen to it. And indeed, had they not heartily approved the law, they must have appeared in the character of enemies and rebels, in the eyes of their Law-giver. Even the least degree of disapprobation of the law, being just so great a degree of enmity against God their Law-giver, who in his law to them had given a transcript of his nature. To dislike the law in such a case, had been the same thing, in effect, as to dislike God himself. And, besides, had they not heartily approved the law, in all its rigour, as strictly just, their ever pretending to *bring a bullock or a goat before the Lord*, and there *lay their hands on the head* of the consecrated animal, and deliver it to the priest to kill, to *sprinkle the blood*, and to *burn the carcass*, in

y Rom. ii. 25. z Gal. v. 3. a Heb. ix. 22. b Heb. x. 4 c Deut. xxvii.

order to *make atonement* for them, that *their sin might be forgiven*, I say, all this must have been a mere farce. For if the Jew who had sinned a sin, did not deserve the threatened curse, why did he *bring his atonement* to God? why did he practically say, "my blood deserves to be shed, as this bullock's is; and I deserve to be consumed in the fire of God's wrath; as this bullock in this fire?" If he did not approve the law, as strictly just, what was all this, but lying to God [d]? From all which it is plain, that the children of Israel were obliged heartily to approve of their law in the sight of God, in all its rigour as strictly just; and to say, with St. Paul, *the law is holy, the commandment is holy, just, and good.*

"6. But if they had such a view of things, and such a temper, as would lay a foundation for them heartily to approve the law, the same view of things, and the same temper, would prepare and dispose them heartily to approve of the Gospel, and comply with it. And so, their school-master would bring them to Christ, to be justified by faith."

It was impossible the Jews should heartily approve their law, in its requiring them "to love God with all their hearts, and obey him in every thing;" unless under a view of his supreme excellency, his entire right to them, and absolute authority over them, attended with an answerable frame of heart. Nor could they possibly approve of it, as equal and right, that the favour of God should, by their law, be suspended on this condition; unless they saw that no creature is worthy to be beloved by God, but those who love him with all their hearts, and give unto him, in all respects, and at all

d And as the Jew could not consistently bring his *sin-offering*, or exercise faith in the promised Messiah, without an hearty approbation of the divine law; so neither could he love God, or *repent*, or yield any *sincere obedience*.—For, if he thought the law *too severe*, he would think God too severe for giving of it; and so, not love, but dislike him: he would be disposed to justify himself in breaking it; and in all respects, have the heart of a *rebel*.—So that, under the Jewish dispensation, there could be no virtuous action done, nothing that had the nature of real piety, or that had the least true goodness in it, in the sight of God, until the law was approved of. Till this, they must be considered as enemies to God and his law, and uninterested in the great atonement of Christ, and all their religious performances and costly sacrifices, as so many splendid pieces of hypocrisy. Where there is godly sincerity in the heart, God's law will be sincerely approved of; and no where else. Rom. vii. 12. and viii. 7, 8.

times, the honour and glory which is his due. Nor could they heartily approve of it, that the least contempt by them cast upon the DEITY, should expose them to his everlasting displeasure; unless they saw the infinite evil of such a crime resulting from God's being infinitely worthy to be loved with all the heart, and obeyed in every thing. Nor could they heartily take all the blame to themselves, notwithstanding their inability to yield perfect obedience; unless they felt that their inability did not lessen their blame. Nor could they reconcile the eternal torments of hell, threatened by their law, to the infinite wisdom and goodness of the supreme governor, unless they saw that sin deserved so great a punishment; that it is a wise and good thing for the supreme governor of the world to punish those that treat him with contempt, according to their deserts; that this honour and respect, herein shown to the DEITY, is due to his sacred majesty, and is needful to establish his authority, and secure the honour of his government.

But let a Jew have these views, and an answerable frame of heart; even such a supreme respect to the Deity, and regard for his honour, as in the nature of the thing is absolutely necessary to reconcile him to the law, and induce him heartily to approve of it, and he would at the same time be disposed to approve of, and comply with the Gospel. If the law, although a ministration of death, appeared glorious to the Jew, as being suited to exalt God, to secure to him his just rights, to maintain the honour of his government and authority, to deter from every instance of rebellion; much more would the Gospel appear glorious, as being suited, not only to answer these ends to the best purpose, but being also, at the same time, *a ministration of life*. If it appeared glorious to the Jew that these ends should be answered, although by the *eternal damnation* of the sinner, *much more glorious* would it appear, if these ends could be all answered, and yet the sinner *eternally saved*. If therefore he approved of the law, he would be even ravished with the gospel; which not only exalts God, and discountenances sin, but also humbles and saves the sinner, and glorifies grace, as it is written, "*the letter killeth*;" i. e. "the law dooms the sinner to eternal

death:" "but the Spirit giveth life;" i. e. the Gospel gives eternal life to the sinner. Now therefore, "if the ministration of death was glorious," as indeed it was, "*the glory of Moses' countenance*," being a visible emblem of it; "shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? If the ministration of condemnation be GLORY, much more doth the ministration of righteousness," and justification unto life, "exceed in GLORY [e]?"

7. And the Jew being used to see bulls and goats brought to the tabernacle, and presented before the Lord, and substituted to die in the room of the transgressor of the law; and having often himself brought a bullock or a goat before the Lord, and laid his hands upon the head of the animal, that it might die in his room, and make atonement for his sin; I say, the Jew being thus used to see that which was *without spot or blemish* substituted to die for the guilty, and this method of atonement having grown familiar by long custom, he would be prepared to understand the Gospel, and to take in the idea which it exhibited of the death of Christ, on whom *the iniquities of us all were laid* [f], and who died *the just for the unjust* [g], being brought as the bullock of old, and *set forth to be a propitiation for sin*, that by *faith in his blood* we might be justified [h], himself being *made a curse for us*, that the *blessing of Abraham might come on us* [i].

And the Jew, on the *great day of atonement*, from year to year, all his life long, having been used to see the high-priest dressed in his holy robes, with the names of the children of Israel upon his heart, and *holiness to the Lord* written in his forehead, enter the tabernacle, to go into the most holy place, into the immediate presence of God, with the blood of atonement in his hand [k], would be hereby prepared understandingly to behold our great HIGH-PRIEST, CHRIST JESUS, with his own blood, enter into heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for us [l]. And thus the law was, in its whole constitution, wisely framed, and suited to be a school-master

e 2 Cor. iii. 6—9. *f* Isai. liii. 6. *g* 1 Pet. iii. 18.
h Rom. iii. 25. *i* Gal. iii. 13, 14. *k* Exod. xxviii. Lev. xvi.
l Heb. ix.

to bring the Jew to Christ, that he might be justified by faith [m].

And thus we have gone through what was proposed, have considered the occasion of the words, viewed the character of the persons the apostle had to deal with, seen how these words were introduced in the thread of the apostle's argument, and particularly considered what ground there was in the nature and constitution of the *Mosaic dispensation* for this observation, from all which the exact sense of the words may be clearly determined.

And that which may, if need be, still further confirm us in it, that we have entered into the apostle's very sentiments in this point, is that this sense of the text seems exactly to harmonize with St. Paul's own experience in the case. For he was born a Jew, and educated a Pharisee, and was once very zealous in the scheme he is now confuting, and now and then in his Epistles he drops a hint, or rather plainly declares, how he himself was brought off from the Pharisaical scheme of justification, to an entire dependence on Christ Jesus for salvation. While he was a Pharisee, he had the same superficial, indistinct, and confused notion of the law, as the rest of that sect had; as a rule to which, if he conformed his life, he should enjoy the favour of God, and eternal happiness. Not once imagining, that it required *sinless perfection on pain of eternal damnation*. "No; so far from it, that I not only thought I could, but thought I actually did, live up to what the law required. *For as touching the righteousness which is in the law, I was blameless*, for I was then *without the law*, without any knowledge, or sense of its true meaning. And this was the reason my sinfulness was by me unobserved. For in those days, I saw little, or no corruption

m OBJ. Under the Jewish dispensation "the priest made atonement for sin by sacrificing a beast, ONLY as that was a sign and testimony of the sacrificer's pure and upright heart." Taylor on Atonement, page 22. "Nor would they be finally saved but by their own obedience." p. 114.

ANS. Then the law was not a school-master to bring them to Christ, that they might be justified by faith, as St. Paul affirms. But rather a school-master to bring them to their own righteousness, that they might be justified by that. It was adapted to train them up in a self-righteous temper, and effectually to prepare them to reject the great atonement of Christ. Rom. x. 3.

in my heart; and what I did see, did not terrify me. I apprehended no danger. For while I was *without the law sin was dead.* And now in these days I was an enemy to Christianity, and persecuted it, and did all I could to suppress it. For *I was alive without the law* at that time, confident of my own goodness, and of God's favour, and in high expectations of eternal life upon the foot of my own virtue, ignorant of God, and of his law, and of my own heart. But when the commandment, as requiring sinless perfection on pain of eternal damnation, came into view, and was set home upon my heart and conscience by the spirit of God, my fancied goodness began to appear as dung, a heap of filth, and sin revived, even all the wickedness of my heart and life rose up into clear view, and stared me in the face; and I immediately felt myself under the curse, and expected to have it executed in a moment. I stood guilty before God: I was shut up under sin; I saw no way to escape; my heart failed me; I died; I felt I was a dead man, a lost man, by law; and I gave up all hopes of ever obtaining life this way. *The law which was ordained to life,* and by which I thought life was to be obtained, I found to be unto death. It slew me. It killed all my false religion, and all my self-righteous hopes, and made me for ever despair of obtaining life by my own goodness. And my mouth was stopped; I had nothing to say, because I saw *the law was holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good.* And thus I *through the law became dead to the law.* But ever since that solemn hour, when Jesus Christ, and the way of salvation by free grace through him was revealed in me, I have sought to be found in Christ, and expected to be *justified by faith without the deeds of the law.* And in a word, all my hopes and expectations are so entirely built on Christ, that I may truly say, that *the life I live in the flesh, is by faith on the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*" So St. Paul experienced, and so he believed, and so he preached, and so he wrote in all his Epistles. See *Rom.* iii. 19, 20. And Chap. vii. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. *Gal.* i. 13—16. And Chap. ii. 16. 19, 20. *Phil.* iii. 3—9 [n].

[n] Perhaps, by this time, some readers may begin to pause, and reason within

And now there is but one thing more that needs to be observed, in order to our full understanding of the apostle's reasonings upon this subject, and to prepare the way to apply all that has been said to us, who are not Jews, who were not Jews, who were never under Moses' law, but are by nature Gentiles, viz.

That the law given at Mount Sinai, as to its moral precepts, was nothing more than a new and plainer edition and republication of the law of nature, which had been in force from the beginning of the world, and was equally binding to all nations, and in all ages. To love God with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves, being equally the duty of the Gentiles as of Jews; and the least sin exposing Gentile as well as Jew to the everlasting wrath of God.

All this is implied in Rom. i. 18. *The wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.* He means, be they Jews or Gentiles, as is plain

themselves, and say,—" How can these things be? I never experienced any such thing. And there are many good men I know of, who never did. Nor do they think it necessary: but think as I do, that if men are *sincere in the service of God*, they will be saved at last. And it must be so: for neither Abraham nor David were perfect. And *there is no man that liveth and sinneth not.*"

ANS. 1. However *sincere* a man may be, in what he calls religion; yet he *cannot possibly be sincere in the service of God*, properly speaking, until after he has been brought to this *right understanding* of the law, and to this *hearty approbation* of it.—He must have this *right understanding* of the law, or he does not so much as know what the law of God is, or what God would have him do: and therefore he cannot so much as desire to do it; or exercise any kind of sincerity about it.—And if he has this right understanding of the law, he must also *approve* of it; or he is so far from *sincerity in God's service*, that he is an *enemy to God.* He to whom the law, although a *ministration of death*, does not appear *glorious*, in all its rigour; to him, God himself does not appear glorious. For the law is but a transcript of the divine nature. It is the very image of God's heart. Or, if any such imagine they love God, it is but a *false image* of God they have framed in their own fancy. For no man loves God, who does not love the law. He that is an enemy to the ONE, is to the OTHER. Rom. viii. 7. And there is nothing in the religion of such men that pleases God. Rom. viii. 8.

2. And if a man is brought rightly to understand, and heartily approve of the law, it will effectually kill a self-righteous spirit, and *bring him to Christ, to be justified by faith.* So Abraham and David were justified, and all other good men. Therefore be not deceived with vain words. But perhaps you will say, (for the sinner dreads to be *shut up under sin*, and *shut up to the faith*,) " We never were under the law of Moses, and so all this is nothing to us."—Well, this comes next to be considered.—*To the law, and to the testimony* let us go.

from what follows: one as well as the other, is exposed to *the wrath of God, for any ungodliness*, or *unrighteousness*; i. e. for any neglect of duty to God, or man; i. e. for any defect of *perfect holiness* in heart or life. And that which makes it evident this is his true meaning, is, that in these words he designedly lays down a *maxim* upon which to build his whole argument, by which to prove the *whole world to be guilty before God*, and that *no flesh*, whether Jew or Greek, could be *justified in the sight of God*, by their own virtue and good deeds. The sum of his argument is this: "every sin exposes to the everlasting wrath of God. But both Jew and Gentile have sinned. Therefore both Jew and Gentile are exposed to the everlasting wrath of God." *The whole world stand guilty before God.* "No man can be justified by law, unless he yield a perfect obedience. But there is none righteous, no, not one, in this sense: therefore no flesh can be justified in the sight of God by law." This, I say, is the sum of his argument: which plainly supposes, that the Gentile was bound by the law of nature to *sinless perfection*, just as the Jew was by the law of Moses: and was equally exposed to *the wrath of God* for any neglect. For otherwise, the apostle's reasoning, although it might prove, that no ONE Jew could be justified by the law of Moses, which he was under; yet it would not prove, that no ONE Gentile could be justified by the law of nature, which he was under. Which yet the apostle intended to prove; that the Gentile as well as the Jew, might be convinced of his need of Christ and Gospel-grace.

Besides, if the Gentile could be justified by the law of nature, he might justly reject the Gospel of Christ, upon the same ground upon which the unbelieving Jews unjustly rejected it. They rejected the Gospel, because they thought they could be justified by their law. But if they could have obtained justification by their law, the apostle virtually owns their conduct was reasonable. For, he grants that *if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law* [o]. And he grants, that *if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain* [p]. Which positions, the Gentile might

[o] Gal. iii. 21. [p] Gal. ii. 21.

have laid hold of, and turned against the apostle, and out of his own mouth have demonstrated, that there was no necessity of Christ's dying for them, if the law of nature, which they were under, did not require sinless perfection, under pain of eternal damnation, as did the Jew's law: but only required them, as some seem vainly to imagine, sincerely to endeavour to do as well as they could, and to be sorry for their failings, and study amendment, and to trust in the mercy of God. If life might have been had in this way by the Gentiles, then Christ had died in vain, as to them.

And if this had been the case, as to the Gentiles, that they might have been thus saved by the law of nature; it will follow, that there never had been any need of Christ's death for the Jewish nation, had it not have been for the law given on Mount Sinai. Had they remained only under the law of nature, they might have been saved by it too, as well as the Gentiles. And so the death of Christ was made necessary merely by the Sinai law. And so, instead of being a schoolmaster to teach the Jews their need of Christ, it was the only thing that made Christ needful: to suppose which, would overthrow law and gospel too. All which absurdities, plainly following on the present hypothesis, do sufficiently prove it to be false; and demonstrate that the law of nature did require sinless perfection on pain of eternal damnation of the Gentiles, just as the law from Mount Sinai did of the Jews. And now the apostle's argument will be conclusive, and no flesh, whether Jew or Gentile, by their own good deeds can be justified in the sight of God. For neither the law of nature, nor the law from Mount Sinai, could give life. And there was a necessity for Christ to die for the Gentile as well as the Jew; *all having sinned, and the whole world standing guilty before God.*

To conclude, it may be added, that sin did, according to reason and strict justice, deserve eternal damnation, antecedent to the giving of the law from Mount Sinai, or it did not. If it did, then, by the law of nature, eternal damnation was due. If it did not, then the law from Mount Sinai was too severe, in threatening a greater punishment for sin than in strict justice it deserved. But God forbid! For *we are sure*

the judgment of God is according to truth, says the inspired apostle in this very case [q]. And again, *is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? God forbid. For then how shall God judge the world* [r]?

If it should be said, (and what is there that will not be said by guilty sinners, rather than own they deserve eternal damnation for their rebellion against the GREAT GOD!) If it should be said, that "neither the law of nature, nor the law from Mount Sinai threatened eternal damnation for sin;" it must be said by the same men, in order to be consistent with themselves, that neither did Christ come to save Jew or Gentile from eternal damnation; as antecedent to the coming of Christ, not one of mankind was in danger of eternal damnation, according to them. And as Christ himself said, he did not come into the world *to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved*; so these men will not say, that Christ's coming exposed the world to an eternal hell, they were in no danger of before. No: so far from it, that the same first principles that will carry men to say as above, will naturally carry them one step further, to say, that those who die impenitent from under the light of the Gospel, are in no danger of eternal damnation [s].

And yet will any be so inconsistent as to say thus, when the eternity of hell torments is as expressly asserted in the BIBLE, as the eternity of heaven's joys? They grant the happiness of heaven will be eternal; and will they deny the eternity of hell-torments, which is expressed in just the same language? *These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal* [t]. Christ has said, that *their*

q Rom. ii. 2. r Rom. iii. 5, 6.

s Some of their first principles are; "God's only end in the moral government of the world is the happiness of the creature. There is no evil in sin as it is against God. Sin, strictly speaking, deserves no punishment. All the miseries which God inflicts upon sinners, in this world or the next, are in mere mercy, to purify and fit them for happiness. The devils and all the damned will finally be saved.—For, goodness, or love to the creature, is the only moral perfection of the divine nature."—A scheme that perfectly suits the heart of a secure sinner.—But a realizing sense of the being and perfections of the GREAT GOD, as revealed in the holy Scriptures, set home on the heart by the spirit of God, would dash it to pieces in a moment.

t Matt. xxv. 46.

worm shall never die, their fire never be quenched, and repeated it over and over [u]. And this *fire* is not designed for their *purification*, as some dream, but expressly for their DESTRUCTION [x], for their *second death* [y], for their EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT [z], than which nothing can be plainer to determine against their notion. The righteous will be considered as the *wheat*, and the wicked as the *chaff*, and the *tares*, which are not to be *purified*, but to be *burnt*, and that with *unquenchable fire*, and the *smoke of their torments shall ascend for ever for ever*. And this is so far from being out of *love* to them, as being designed at *last* for *happiness*, that in them God means to *show his wrath*, and *make his power known*, as being *vessels of wrath* fitted for *destruction*. Thus God teaches us his word; nor can any with the least show of reason say, but that the *eternity of hell torments*, and that under the notion of a *punishment*, is as plainly and fully expressed, as though God had intended we should believe it. Why then is a guilty world so loath to believe it? Doubtless it is because they do not feel that they deserve it. And not being sensible, that they deserve eternal damnation, they venture to disbelieve it, and endeavour to evade the testimony of divine revelation; and then proceed to raise objections from reason against it.

As to their methods of evading the testimony of divine revelation, they need no particular answer; because these men themselves are sensible, that the *Scriptures* speak quite plain enough. And if they would for once, speak out their hearts, they would say, that it is not because the eternity of hell-torments is not plainly revealed in *Scripture*, but only because they do not like to believe the doctrine, that makes them doubt it. It seems too severe that the sinner should lie in hell to all eternity. Therefore they set themselves to evade *Scripture*, and to raise objections against it. And no sooner will these men have heard, what has now been advanced concerning the law of Moses, and the law of nature, as requiring perfect obedience on pain of eternal damnation, but these *objections* will be in their minds.

u Mark ix. 43—48. x Matt. x. 28. 2 Thes. i. 9. y Rev. xx. 14.
z Matt. xiii. 30. Luke iii. 17.

1. "It is not right for God to require of his creatures more than they can do, under the penalty of any punishment at all."

2. "If some sins do deserve some punishment; yet no sin, how great soever, deserves eternal damnation."

3. "Or rather, strictly speaking, sin deserves no punishment at all."

Now these positions, every one will soon discern, need no particular answer from divine revelation; because, the whole of divine revelation is itself a standing confutation of them. Did not God from Mount Sinai require the whole congregation of Israel *to love the Lord their God with all their heart, and obey him in every thing?* And was not the curse denounced against the man that should fail in any one point? Now could the whole congregation yield this sinless perfection every day of their lives, without the least defect in heart, or life? And did not the curse mean, at least, some punishment? And thus the whole law of Moses is a standing confutation of their first maxim. And as for the other two, if any regard was to be had to the plain declarations of the New Testament, sin not only deserves punishment, but everlasting punishment; and at the day of judgment it will be inflicted on all Christless sinners. But it is no satisfaction to these men, to have their objections answered, and their mouths stopped, by the word of God. For, although they pretend to believe the holy Scriptures to be divine; yet, finding so many things in the bible that do by no means suit them, they do as St. Paul did in another case, appeal to Cæsar, as the higher power, and where he hoped to have better justice done him. So, with the same view, these men appeal to reason; nor will they believe the Scriptures mean this or that, how plainly soever expressed, unless it quadrates with their notions, and so appears to them rational. Now were there no depravity in their hearts, to blind and bias their minds, I should have no fear of joining issue according to their desire, and submit these points to be decided solely by reason. For I believe they can be demonstrated from reason as fully, although not so easily, as from Scripture. The Scripture has given us an edition of the law of nature, much plainer and more legible

than that which we have by nature. And this indeed is the true cause that these men appeal from it, as the light of truth there shines too insufferably bright, and refer themselves to reason which, our depravity being so great, they can more easily shut their eyes against. However, who knows but that their hearts may be touched, when the great God is brought into view, and set before their eyes! Therefore,

Let us place ourselves before the awful tribunal of Christ, and attentively view these points, in the light in which they will stand at that solemn day, when every man's conscience will be convinced that God's law is strictly just.

When Christ comes *in the glory of his Father*, and *all the holy angels with him*, and the infinite majesty and greatness of the invisible God shines forth in him, and it appears that *all the nations of the earth are as the small dust of the balance, or drop of the bucket before him*; yea, that the *whole created system* is as nothing and vanity, when compared to God, the great being, the almighty creator, now each of these objections will be sapped at their very foundation[c]. When God appears,

c For these objections, and the whole scheme they belong to in all its various shapes, grow up out of the heart's insensibility of the *infinite greatness and glory of God*.—It would otherwise, be quite impossible that men, and men of thought and penetration, should ever once imagine, that, in a perfect moral government, where an exact proportion is, as themselves acknowledge, always observed, and what is most fit, and right, and beautiful is always done, that in such a government, the GREAT GOD should be less regarded, than the *created system*; the INFINITE CREATOR less respected, than the finite creature: for it is a more gross absurdity, than it would be for a mathematician to affirm, that a million such systems as ours, would be less than a pin's point. And yet, as absurd as it is, it lies at the bottom of almost all the corrupt schemes of religion now in vogue.—First they lay it down for a maxim, "that the honour of the DEITY is not at all considered, or regarded by the supreme moral governor of the world; but only the good of the creature." And upon this foundation, chevalier Ramsey builds his scheme, and so do the ingenious Hutcheson and Turnbull, and the celebrated Taylor, and so does Tindal the famous Deist.—And each, taking this point for granted, seem to demonstrate their various schemes.—Ramsey, "that all, even the devils not excepted, will be finally happy." Hutcheson and Turnbull, "that we naturally have the moral image of God in our hearts."—Taylor, "that we are not fallen creatures." Tindal, "that the Old and New Testament are not from God."

But let this stupidity be removed from the heart, and a realizing sense of the infinite greatness and glory of God fill the soul, so as thoroughly to convince the

and appears in his infinite greatness, clothed with infinite majesty, vested with an authority infinitely binding, *the commandment will come, sin revive,* and the sinner die. Reason and natural conscience will be fully convinced, that the law was strictly just. And every guilty creature will be forced to say, when doomed to depart into everlasting fire, *the Lord is righteous.* Then the bold libertine, in the utmost horror, will see the weakness of all his former pleas. Methinks I hear him say, trembling before the bar of Christ,

"What did I mean, stupid wretch that I was, to say that sin deserved no punishment? What! was it no crime to affront the dread majesty of heaven and earth to his face, as I did in every sin? Was it no crime to treat with contempt HIM whom all heaven adores? Was it no crime to turn my back upon my Maker, and revolt from my rightful sovereign? And by my example to encourage others to go on boldly in rebellion? And if these were crimes, and dreadful crimes I now see they were, does it not now become the righteous governor and judge of the world to be displeased, and to testify his displeasure, and to make his wrath smoke against such a wretch? I once scoffed at serious piety, and ridiculed strict godliness, and was really an open enemy to Jesus Christ. And is it not fit that he should now treat me according to my character? And with indignation banish me for ever from his presence! And from the presence of all his saints, whom once I despised! to dwell for ever with devils, whose interest I served!

"This is the GOD, the infinitely great GOD, whose law I said was too severe! The height of what he required of

heart, that an infinite regard is, and ought to be had, to the honour of the DEITY, in the moral government of the world, and all their schemes will fall to the ground at once. For now we shall see, why sin is punished eternally; and that human nature is, in fact, totally corrupt; that the doctrine of original sin is true; that the Old and New Testament are perfectly agreeable to the perfections of God, and needs of fallen man, and have all the internal marks of divinity.—It will be self-evident, that it is an infinite evil to sin against such a God; we naturally have none of that temper towards him which we ought; we are fallen, lost creatures; we need such a Redeemer and such a Sanctifier as are exhibited in the Old and New Testament; it is fit God should be exalted, the sinner humbled, and grace glorified, agreeable to the *Scripture plan.*

me was to love him with all my heart; as I now see yonder saints and angels love him. But I did not love him! I did not like his ways! I loved my vain companions, and my sinful carnal pleasures! His threatening to punish me for it, instead of reclaiming, did but make me hate his law and government the worse. And I loved to indulge hard thoughts of him, as being too severe; pretending for my excuse, that I had no power to love him; only, alas! because I was not suited with him; but hated all his ways. In this I was like the devil, that I had no heart for God, to love him, or live to him; but was disposed to walk contrary to him in all things. And for this, God may justly hate me, and cast me off, with the devil for ever. For such a kind of inability, I never thought, excused any of my fellow-creatures, who treated me with disrespect and ill-nature on earth. And if they alleged, that they could not help hating me, by way of excuse; if the fault was not in me, but in themselves, I never thought them the less to blame, but the more. Their saying they could not help hating me, instead of excusing the fault, always made it seem worse. Now, this great GOD will deal with me by the same rule. I said, I could not love him; but the fault was not in him, but in me. For, to other beings he appears infinitely amiable; and I only am to blame, that he does not appear so to me. And it is right and just I should be punished.

"And now I behold the Judge ready to pronounce my final doom, the dreadful sentence, *depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*[d]. I would not believe hell-torments to be eternal, although expressly asserted in God's word. I, stupid wretch that I was, did not feel that I deserved everlasting punishment. I was like the *fool*, who *said in his heart, there is no God*[e]. But now I see there is a God; an infinitely GREAT GOD; whom all are under infinite obligations to honour and obey. I might have been before convinced, that God was infinitely worthy to be loved, honoured, and obeyed; and that his infinite worthiness laid me under an infinite obligation; and that an infinite obligation rendered me infinitely to blame; and that

d Matt. xxv. 41. *e* Psal liii. 1.

infinite blame deserved infinite punishment; i. e. the eternal torments of hell. I might have known this before: but I shut my eyes against the light. I pretended, that because I could not *comprehend* his *infinite* greatness and glory, that therefore I could not be laid under an infinite obligation thereby. But I might have known, that a conviction of his infinite greatness and glory did infinitely oblige. Conviction without comprehension, I always knew did oblige in others' cases. As, when I have been convinced that others had more knowledge and wisdom than myself, I never doubted but that I was thereby obliged so much the more to pay them a superior respect on that account, "although their knowledge and wisdom were above my full comprehension. Nor did I ever doubt but that those who were convinced that the torments of hell were eternal, were guilty of infinite folly, in rushing into such an endless misery, although dreadful, infinitely beyond their comprehension. And why might not I have known, that a conviction, without a comprehension, of God's infinite worthiness to be loved, honoured, and obeyed, would render me infinitely to blame, in treating him with disrespect and contempt! I might have known it. But I loved darkness rather than light. I loved the ways of sin; and God was not in all my thoughts! But now, alas! the day is come! And I am at the bar, ready to receive my final doom! God is just! My mouth is stopped! I am self-condemned!" Thus, at the day of judgment, the sinner's reason and conscience will be thoroughly convinced, that he deserves to be punished; all his impotency notwithstanding, and that, even with the eternal torments of hell. And so that will be, not only a *day of wrath*, but also of the *revelation of the righteous judgment of God*[f]. And since all mankind must see the justice of God's law, sooner or later; would it not be wiser for them who esteem themselves the wits of the world, instead of endeavouring to blind their minds by false reasonings, rather to lay open their minds honestly to the light, while there is yet hope in their case? since otherwise, with all their boasted wit, they themselves, to their un-

f Rom. ii. 5.

speakable regret, will eternally think they acted the part of fools.

Thus, then to sum up all in a few words, it appears that the law from Mount Sinai, given immediately by God himself, to the whole congregation of Israel, required sinless perfection, as the condition of eternal life; and for the least failing threatened eternal damnation; and therefore, by this law, not any could be justified in the sight of God; and yet the whole congregation were obliged heartily to approve this law to be strictly just in all its rigour; which if they did, would prepare them to understand, believe, approve of, and comply with the Gospel; and so the law was in its own nature, suited to be a school-master to bring them to Christ, that they might be justified by faith. And the law of nature, being for substance the same with that from Mount Sinai, is suited to answer the same end, with respect to the Gentile nations, who were never under the Jewish dispensation. And so Jew and Greek are all under sin; the whole world stand guilty before God; and by their own virtue or goodness, no flesh can be justified in his sight, and so all stand in absolute perishing need of Christ, and free grace. And now, upon a review of all that has been said, the following remarks and inferences may justly be made:

1. "The law of Moses, and St. Paul's manner of reasoning upon it, are inconsistent with the *Arminian* scheme of religion, and do as effectually confute it, as the scheme of the Pharisees, and Pharisaical Christians of that age."

One of the most fundamental maxims in the *Arminian* scheme, is, "that in the nature of things, it is not just for God to require more of his creatures than they can do, and then threaten to punish them for not doing[g]." And when

g And so they suppose, that God was bound in justice to make some abatements in his law, and to bring it down to a level with our present state; and yet are so absurd and inconsistent, as to suppose, that Christ died to purchase these abatements, i. e. died to get justice done us. And if we will yield sincere obedience to this new abated law, we shall be justified and saved. This sincere obedience, it seems, is the utmost that God in justice can require of us. So then, if we yield this, we shall be justified, because we have come up to the rule of our duty. Or, if we have any defects, (i. e. are not so sincere as we should be,) Christ will make up for them. These are the notions of many, and they for sub-

they are told, that we ought to distinguish between that inability which consists in, or results from, *the want of natural faculties, as a man that has no legs cannot walk, a man that has no hands cannot work*, &c.; in which cases, men ought not to be commanded to do what they *cannot*, and then punished for not doing, it being manifestly unjust, as is acknowledged on all sides: I say, when they are told that we ought to distinguish between such a kind of inability, and that which consists in and results from a bad and WICKED HEART; as "Joseph's brethren hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him[h]," the Pharisees hated Christ, and could not hear his words,[i] &c.; in which cases, common sense teaches that men are not the less to blame for their inability, and may justly be commanded to do their duty, and punished if they do it not. I say, when the Arminians are told of this distinction, they say "there is nothing in it, it is a mere *metaphysical nicety*, inability is inability, if men cannot they cannot, and it is impossible it should be just in God to require of his creatures what they cannot do, and then damn them for not doing."

Well, be it so; how then will they reconcile their scheme with the *law of Moses?* Did not the law of Moses require perfect obedience? It is plain it did. It is a fact that cannot be denied. Arminians, Pelagians, Socinians, that are men

stance, being the very same the Pharisaical Galatians had, St. Paul's arguments lie full against them. And was St. Paul to deal with them, he would say, "I, Paul, say unto you, that your duties will not save you, unless you yield a perfect obedience. And while you seek to be justified by your own goodness, Christ will be of no effect to you, will make up for none of your failings. Gal. v. 3, 4, 5. Therefore, every man of you, that is of this self-righteous disposition, is under the CURSE." Gal. iii. 10.

N. B. It is worthy of observation, that the apostle's argument is not, "you are not sincere in your obedience: therefore you cannot be justified." Nor would this have been so convincing; because the men he had to deal with, verily thought they were sincere. But his argument is, "you are not perfect in your obedience: therefore you cannot be justified." Now they had nothing to say, only, that they *hoped Christ would make up for their defects.* (But, says the apostle, "Christ shall profit you nothing.")—Unless, they added, "if we cannot be saved by our duties, what good do they do?" *Wherefore then serveth the law?*—"To be a school-master," says Paul, "to bring you to Christ, that ye might be justified by faith."

h Gen. xxxvii. 4. *i* John viii. 43.

of learning do not pretend to deny it. Well, had the whole congregation of Israel POWER, in the sense Arminians use the word, to yield perfect obedience, in heart and life, all their lives long, without ever failing in the least degree, in any one point, at any one time? It is plain they had not. Yea, no Arminian ever pretended they had. Well, when the Levites said, *cursed be the man that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them,* were not all the people to say, Amen, and so approve the law in all its rigour? This again is plain fact. So that here the Arminian has no *metaphysical niceties,* (as he loves to call those clear distinctions, and conclusive arguments, which he is not able fairly to get rid of,) to grapple with; but *plain facts*—facts acknowledged on all hands. Now *facts are stubborn things.*—Here we see God gave a law, required more than they could do, denounced the curse against the man that failed in the least point; and yet, in express contradiction, the Arminian says, "it is absolutely unjust for God to require more of his creatures than they can do, and then threaten to punish them for not doing." Wherefore it is manifest, that the Arminian scheme is, in this, directly inconsistent with the law of Moses. And therefore, if the law of Moses came from God, their scheme in this *fundamental maxim,* and in all that depends upon it, is false.

This is a short and easy way to confute the Arminian scheme, quite level with the capacity of common people, who are not so well able to attend to a long chain of arguments. And it was designed by a God of infinite wisdom, who knows how to let in light upon weak and ignorant minds, in effect, for this very purpose. For it was designed to convince men that, in themselves, they are absolutely lost and undone. And every thing meets in this method of confuting the Arminian scheme, which could be desired to give the fullest satisfaction to the minds of men. For the argument is not founded upon here and there a dark text of Scripture, of doubtful signification, and seemingly capable of several different meanings; but upon the plain nature of the whole Mosaic dispensation; upon facts so evident, as to be acknowledged on all hands. Nor is there so much as room left to suspect that we

misunderstand the Mosaic dispensation, and view the facts in a wrong light, inasmuch as St. Paul has led the way before us, and under divine inspiration, has shown this to be the nature and design of the Mosaic dispensation, viewing the facts in the same light, and arguing from them in the same manner, as has been already observed. That if we may give credit to the law of Moses, or to the great apostle of the Gentiles, or to a method of reasoning full of light and demonstration, or to all together, we may sit down here fully satisfied.

And as the law of Moses, and the Gospel of Christ, are in a perfect harmony; and, as on this account, what is inconsistent with one, must be with the other; so it is manifest from the apostle's manner of reasoning, that the aforesaid Arminian maxim is quite inconsistent with the Gospel. For, according to that maxim, mankind have power to do that which would entitle them to the favour of God, if Christ had never died. But, says St. Paul, *if there had been a law which could have given life, verily righteousness had come by the law. And if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.* Gal. ii. 21. and Chap. iii. 21 [k].

[k] If the Arminian scheme is inconsistent with the law and with the Gospel, it will unavoidably follow, that the *religious exercises* of those who are Arminians at heart, are not in conformity to law or Gospel, but of a contrary nature; even their *love to God*, their *faith in Christ*, their repentance, their sincere obedience, and every other branch of their religion. The whole spirit and frame of their minds is contrary to law, and to Gospel, just as their scheme of religion is. And indeed, the scheme of religion they have in their heads, grows up out of the frame of their hearts. They are both of the same nature. They feel as they believe, "it is not just for God to require sinless perfection on pain of eternal damnation. If I do as well as I can, it is not fair I should be damned."—They would not love God, if they did not think he was of their opinion. Their faith in Christ, and their hopes of heaven, harmonize with these opinions; and so does their repentance, and their obedience. So that if these principles are inconsistent with law and Gospel, it will follow, the whole system of the religion of their hearts is so too; the scheme in their heads, and the religion of their hearts, being exactly suited to each other.

Some comfort themselves much, that the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, which Christ and his apostles had so low an opinion of, had nothing of the nature of true virtue in it; supposing this to be the only reason they could not be justified by it. Little thinking that it is their own case; that there is not the least real goodness in all their religion.—But it is sometimes so, that what it *highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God.* Luke xvi. 15.

I think, in this the Arminians are much more consistent. For while they maintain, "that God cannot justly require more of us than we can do ourselves," they add, "that we did not need Christ to obey or die in our stead," and accordingly, they say, "he never designed any such thing." But then, if God Almighty had designed to guard against their scheme, and to prepare the way for the reception of the doctrine of atonement by the blood of Christ, it is hard to say, how he could possibly have done it to better purpose, than he has done in the Mosaic dispensation.

No serious, pious Jew, who understood the law, as requiring sinless perfection under pain of eternal damnation, and who had heard the CURSE, and heartily said AMEN, could have embraced the Arminian scheme, or ever once believed their fundamental maxim. Nor could any serious, pious Jew, who had seen the High-Priest, from year to year, on the great day of atonement, lay his hands on the head of the *scape-goat*, and confess over him, and lay upon him all the iniquities and sins of the children of Israel; and who had himself, scores of times, with a humble and broken heart, brought a bullock or a ram before the Lord, and laid his hands on his head, that he might die in his room, and make atonement for his sin, that it might be forgiven him; I say, no such pious Jew could possibly have embraced the Socinian scheme, or ever rejected the doctrine of Christ's atonement.

The Arminians and Socinians are angry at creeds, confessions, and catechisms; because they are taught to children, and tend to prejudice the rising generation against their scheme. But no creeds, no confessions, no catechisms, were ever so framed to prejudice one against Arminianism and Socinianism, as the law of the great GOD given at Mount Sinai. Creeds, confessions, catechisms, contain only a number of words and sentences. But here in the law of Moses every thing was acted over, and that exceedingly to the life. God spake the law HIMSELF, and that with an exceeding loud voice. It thundered and lightened, the mountain quaked and trembled, God appeared like the flame of a devouring fire in the eyes of all the congregation of Israel.

And thus the greatness and majesty, the holiness and authority of God, were represented, and brought into clear view; and thus the law was set home. And half the tribes stood on Mount Gerizzim, and half the tribes stood upon Mount Ebal, and while the Levites, before all the congregation, repeated the curse twelve times going, all the people answered, and said, AMEN. And thus, the reasonableness and equity of the law was visibly represented in this public transaction. And yearly and monthly, and weekly and daily, in a variety of most significant, solemn, and public transactions, the substitution of Christ, as of a lamb without spot, to die as an atonement for sin, that sin might be forgiven, was visibly represented. So that it seems beyond the art of man to contrive any method more wisely suited to set the guilty, lost, perishing state of the sinner, and the doctrine of atonement, in a more clear and striking light than it is in the law of Moses; especially, as now explained to us by the Gospel of Christ. Well, therefore, in so clear a case, and in points of so great importance, might the divinely inspired apostle say, as in *Gal.* i. 8, 9. *If any, though an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel, let him be ACCURSED.* Nor have those, who after all venture to do so, just reason to expect to escape the apostle's repeated curse. In all things lawful, the apostle would readily *become all things to all men,* for he was of a very condescending disposition. But when any of the great doctrines of the Gospel were assaulted, he would not abate one hair; for he was no trimmer; he was no man-pleaser; but a servant of Jesus Christ. Nor are those ministers, who seek to please an ungodly world by curtailing the Gospel of Christ, any of them, the servants of Christ, according to the judgment of the inspired apostle. *Gal.* i. 10. *If I pleased man, I should not be the servant of Christ.*

Indeed, there have been by those who expect to be justified by their sincere obedience, various ways contrived to evade the apostle's arguments, and escape his curse; but all equally vain. Which way soever they turn, St. Paul is ready to answer them, and stop up their way, and *shut them up under sin,* and *shut them up to the faith.*

Sometimes they say, "the Galatians expected to be justi-

fied by circumcision, and observing the other rites of the ceremonial law, which being abolished, there was no virtue in these their unrequired duties, and so they could not be justified by them." But St. Paul's argument was not, "you trust in duties, which God does not require: therefore by these duties you cannot be justified." But it was this, "you do not yield perfect obedience to the whole law; therefore you cannot be justified." Therefore,

They say, "it is true, we cannot be justified by a law that requires sinless perfection, nor do we expect it. But this does not prove but that our sincere obedience will justify us through Christ, according to the Gospel." But St. Paul's argument was not, "you expect to be justified by sinless perfection, but cannot." But it was this: "you expect to be justified by an obedience short of sinless perfection; but no obedience short of sinless perfection will justify you. For Christ will not make up for your defects. He *will profit you nothing*, if you go this way for justification [l]."

Again, they say, "the obedience of the Galatians was not sincere. And that was the reason they could not be justified by it. But our obedience is sincere." But St. Paul's argument was not; "your obedience is not sincere; therefore

l Gal. v. 2. *Behold, I Paul, say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.* Not that circumcision, merely of itself, would seclude them from the blessings of the Gospel. For Paul circumcised Timothy. Acts xvi. 3. Not that by their being circumcised, they meant to renounce Christianity, and embrace Judaism. For they had not a thought of that, as is plain from the whole epistle. But because they trusted in their circumcision, and in their other religious performances, to recommend them to the favour of God, and entitle them to eternal life. Not that they looked upon their obedience as perfect: for they never once imagined that sinless perfection was necessary, or ever thought they were bound to keep the whole law. Ver. 3.—Nor that they trusted in their imperfect, sincere obedience, without any dependance on Christ: for they were so strong in the faith, that *Christ would profit them*, and *be of effect to them*, that St Paul could hardly beat them off from their false hopes. He speaks, as knowing they would not readily believe him. BEHOLD, I PAUL, SAY UNTO YOU: and so truly as I am divinely inspired, you may depend upon it; *Christ will profit you nothing*: will make up for none of your failings, as you vainly expect. So that it appears, the Galatians professed Christianity, and depended upon Christ, and hoped that through him, they, by their sincere, although imperfect obedience, should obtain the favour of God, and eternal life. Just as our Arminians do now-a-days. Nor is there any essential difference between their schemes.

you cannot be justified by it." But it was, "your obedience is not perfect: therefore you cannot be justified by it."

Again, they say, "Christ has purchased an abatement of the law; and promised justification to our sincere obedience." But St. Paul says, "the law is not abated one tittle; but requires sinless perfection still: and curses the man that ever at any time fails in the least point. Nor will any obedience justify, short of perfection." So that which way soever they turn, St. Paul meets them, and there is no escape.

"Yes," say they, "we hold justification by faith, just as St. Paul did. By faith he meant sincere obedience, and so do we." "No, no," says St. Paul, "if by faith you mean sincere obedience, you cannot be justified by it; for I constantly affirm, that no obedience short of sinless perfection can justify you. If you will be justified by obedience, it must be perfect. Sincere obedience will not answer. For it is written, *cursed is every man that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.*"

Seeing, then, nothing is to be done with St. Paul, but still he will be against them, therefore they run to St. James to help them against St. Paul, and look all over the bible for help. And so having strengthened themselves by perverting some passages of Scripture, they venture out, and boldly say, "That if St. Paul does in fact mean that our sincere obedience will not justify us, he contradicts almost the whole bible, which constantly declares, that repentance is absolutely necessary to forgiveness; that we are justified by our works, and not by faith only; that none but good men shall ever be saved; yea, that keeping the commands is what gives a right to the tree of life."

Doubtless, these men, had they lived in the apostle's day, would have been as zealous against St. Paul, as ever any were at Galatia or Antioch. Nor would his single authority have satisfied them. And if a word or sentence of another sound at any time dropped from any other of the apostles, on whatever subject they were preaching, it would have been picked up with joy, to prove St. Paul's scheme to be singular. It was this same spirit which obliged St. Paul to write this laboured epistle, to vindicate himself and establish the truth.

And he plainly demonstrates that their scheme was contrary to the law of Moses, and to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and pronounceth the man accursed that ventured to preach it. Vain is it, therefore, now, to bring in a detached sentence or two, from here and there in the bible, to overset a doctrine that St. Paul affirms and proves cannot be overset, without oversetting both law and Gospel. These men must prove that St. Paul's words did actually mean some other thing, or they must believe him to be right, or they must call his inspiration into question, as some of the same stamp did 1700 years ago. But it is not all the wit of man can ever show St. Paul's words capable of any sense consistent with the common Arminian scheme. They have tried, but all in vain, this many a year, till many have argued themselves into downright infidelity; for he could not have framed his argument better, had he been to have written against Arminianism in its very present dress. As to the sentences of a different sound here and there in the bible, which they refer to, their consistence with St. Paul's doctrine hath been often shown by divines; and till these men have, at least, attempted an answer, it is needless to offer much at present[m]. However, I will just observe,

First. That it is true, "that repentance[n] is absolutely necessary to the forgiveness of sins." For it belongs to the very essence of justifying faith, which implies in its nature such a sense of the great evil of sin, as effectually turns the heart from it to God, to be on his side, and on the side of his law, against sin and self, as I shall presently show. And yet this is nothing against St. Paul's doctrine, as I shall also make appear under the *next inference*.

Secondly. "There is not the least difficulty in what St. James says, of Abraham's being *justified by works* and *not by*

m This was done in Mr. Edwards' Sermon on Justification, printed at Boston, (N. E.) 20 years ago, to which, my answer, as yet, never has been attempted.

n And because, where there is true repentance, there is always a disposition heartily to forgive those that have injured us, and no where else; therefore our Saviour teaches us, that those, and those only, may expect forgiveness from God, who do *from the heart forgive* others. Matt. vi. 14, 15.—Those who have not an heart to forgive and love their enemies, are impenitent, unhumbled, Christless sinners.

faith alone." It being so very plain, in what respect he was *justified by works,* when he *offered up his son* Isaac. Only turn back to the twenty-second Chapter of Genesis, and there you may read the whole story, and you cannot be at a loss. *And it came to pass after these things,* i. e. fifty years after Abram had been in a justified state, (Heb. xi. 8.) *that God did tempt,* (i. e. try,) Abraham. *Take now thy* SON, *thine* ONLY SON ISAAC, *whom thou* LOVEST, *and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer* HIM *there for a* BURNT-OFFERING, &c. Abraham, whose love to God was supreme, readily obeyed. Now follows his justification, in these very words; ver. 12. NOW I KNOW THAT THOU FEAREST GOD, *seeing thou hast not withheld thy* SON, *thine* ONLY SON. And indeed this was sufficient proof that he did *fear God.* And thus he *showed his faith,* which he had had about 50 years, *by his works.* And now he might with peculiar propriety be *called the friend of God.* And in this same sense all true believers are *justified by works;* i. e. by external visible acts of obedience, under great trials, it becomes manifest that they do *fear God:* while stony ground hearers at the same time fall away[o]. All which has not the least show of inconsistency with our being justified *by faith without works,* in the sense, and according to the language of St. Paul.

THIRDLY. And if the whole bible does constantly declare, "that none but good men shall ever be saved;" so does St. Paul too.—But this does not prove "that they are saved by their goodness."

FOURTHLY. Yea, it is constantly maintained by St. Paul, and by all the apostles, "that perseverance in all holy living through all the great trials they may meet with, is absolutely necessary to an admittance into heaven at last. Compare Rev. ii. 7. 11. 17. 26. and Chap. iii. 5. 12. 21. with Rev. xxi. 7. and Chap. xxii. 14. Yea, St. Paul, speaking to true believers, says, *if ye live after the flesh ye shall die*[p]. But this does not prove that they are justified, or saved by this their goodness. Yea, notwithstanding all this, and in a perfect consistence with all this, it remains true, that we are *saved by*

o Matt. xiii. *p* Rom. viii. 13.

grace; through faith, not of works [q]. But how? Why, thus the difficulty may be easily solved. *We are all the children of God, by faith in Jesus Christ* [r]. *And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ,* to the heavenly inheritance [s]. And if our actual enjoyment of the heavenly inheritance is suspended, upon our being *the followers of God, as dear children* [t], this is but a proper test to determine our character. For some, who profess to be children of God, fall away, like the stony-ground-hearers, who indeed never had any root in themselves, when a time of trial comes [u]. Now, if we persevere through all trials, it proves our sincerity; and demonstrates, that we were not merely *the children of God in name,* but in truth. And shows that we did really believe in Christ, not with a dead, but with a true and living faith. Thus Abraham, in this sense, was *justified by his works.* And thus, in this sense, they that *do the commandments, have right to the tree of life.* For NOW I KNOW THAT THOU FEAREST GOD. NOW I KNOW *thou art a* TRUE CHILD *of God* becomes applicable to such. And if children, then heirs, according to the tenour of the new covenant.

Yea, I may add that, to persevere in all holy living, is but to show the heart, and act up to the character of a true child of God. It is, in effect, but to *maintain the temper of a child.* And this is but the same thing, viewed in another point of light, with that faith whereby we become children. For justifying faith implies in it *every filial grace,* as we shall afterwards see. So that perseverance in all holy living, is implied in our perseverance in faith. But it is necessary we should persevere in faith, in order to our final admittance into heaven, for the same reason, that it was necessary that we should be first united to Christ by faith, in order to our being interested in him. Let the marriage union be dissolved between the husband and the wife, and the woman has no longer any right in the man's estate. It is necessary that they continue united, in marriage, that she may have *right to his estate.* So, it is necessary that we continue in Christ, that we may

q Eph. ii. 8, 9. *r* Gal. iii. 26. 29. *s* Rom. viii. 17.
t Eph. v. i. *u* Matt. xiii. 20. 21.

remain the children of God through him; that being children, we may be heirs, and so have *right to the tree of life*[x]. But to prevent misunderstandings, it is needful to observe the contents of the next inference[y], which, now at length I proceed unto.

2. From what has been said, we may learn, "that although we are justified by faith, yet we are not justified for faith." That is, our faith, considered as something holy, virtuous, and good in us, is not that which recommends us to God, in whole, or in part. Nor has it, viewed in this point of light, *any hand in our justification.*—For,

The true believer, considered as in himself, without any relation to Christ, does, in strict justice, deserve damnation after he believes, as much as he did before. The act of faith makes no amends for his past sins; none at all. The account stands just as it did. Only, as he falls short of sinless perfection every moment; so every moment he merits damnation afresh; according to law: a law holy, just, and good. And indeed, it must in reason be so. For if we should perfectly devote ourselves to God in heart and life for the time to come, we should but give God his just due; for we are his, wholly his. But doing our duty for the future, cannot make up for past neglects, any more than our paying the debts we may contract for the time to come, will satisfy for debts contracted in time past. Besides, our sins are infinite evils: but our virtues are of finite worth: but finite put in balance to infinite is nothing. For when it is substracted, the remainder is still infinite. Therefore only the mere defects, attending our best services, our highest exercises of grace, in this imperfect state, merit eternal damnation. Nor does all the grace and goodness in us make the least amends. So that the believer, in his purest and highest act of faith, considered as in himself, without any relation to Christ, merits eternal damnation, instead of justification to eternal life.

Or, if we leave speculation, and come to experience, still the point before us appears to be true. "For the believer

x John xv. 6.

y If the reader would see this subject thoroughly discussed, let him read Mr. Edwards' sermon on *Justification by Faith alone.*

feels that hell is his proper due, that very moment he exercises faith in Christ." For why else does he apply to the atonement of Christ? For if he does not deserve to go to hell, he does not need the sacrifice of Christ to save him from hell. His looking to Christ by faith, to be saved from hell, supposes he feels hell to be his proper due. Else, it is a mere mockery.

But it is plain from Moses, and from St. Paul, "that no goodness short of sinless perfection can entitle us to the favour of God." Faith, as it is our virtue, cannot do it any more than repentance, or sincere obedience. For nothing short of sinless perfection can do it. But faith is not sinless perfection. Therefore we cannot be justified on the account of our faith. In a word, St. Paul's reasonings do as effectually prove that faith cannot justify us in this sense, as that works cannot. And indeed, faith viewed in this light, is as much a work, as any other Christian grace whatsoever, or as any external act of obedience a man can do. And he that depends upon his faith to recommend him to God, depends upon his own righteousness, as much as the Galatians did. He is in the same scheme, only a little refined. There is no essential difference. The Galatians trusted in their own righteousness. So do these. The Galatians nevertheless hoped and expected that Christ would be of some effect to them, and profit them some. And so do these. The Galatians had never had the law sufficiently set home upon their hearts. So it is with these. The only difference is, that the Galatians seem to have trusted chiefly in their external religious performances; and these trust chiefly in the internal religious frame of their hearts. But as there was nothing of the nature of true virtue in the duties of the self-righteous Galatians; so there is nothing of the nature of true faith, in the faith of these self-righteous believers. It being as inconsistent with the nature of faith in Christ, for a man to make a righteousness of his faith, as it is to make a righteousness of any thing else.

If it should be inquired, "in what sense then are we justified by faith?" I answer—When the Jew brought a bullock for a sin-offering, and presented it before the Lord, and

laid his hands on the head of it, that it might die in his stead, and make an atonement for his sin, that it might be forgiven; if he acted understandingly, and uprightly, it implied an hearty approbation of the law; which he could not have, without a supreme love to God; which would naturally lay the foundation for repentance and sincere obedience. Yet it was not that approbation of the law, nor that love to God, nor that repentance, nor that sincere obedience, nor his bringing the bullock, nor his laying his hands on his head, which was to make atonement for his sin; but the blood of the bullock; according to the constant language of the law of Moses. So, although true faith in Christ implies an hearty approbation of the law, which cannot be without a supreme love to God, which will naturally lay a foundation for repentance and sincere obedience; yet, it is not this hearty approbation of the law, nor this supreme love to God, nor this repentance, nor this sincere obedience, no, nor the act of faith itself, that makes atonement for sin; but only the blood of Christ; according to the constant language of the New Testament. Nor are any of these, therefore, to be depended upon; but only Jesus Christ. Nor can faith do any thing towards justifying us, unless as it UNITES us to Christ. For in the very act of faith, all pretences to the divine favour on our own account, are given up; and hell is owned to be our due. And we look only to the merits and atonement of Christ: leave all other refuges, and fly hither: are divorced from the law, and married to Christ; according to the language of St. Paul [z]. And the married wife, we know, is interested in her husband's estate. For they two are become one flesh [a]. They are one in law. And in consequence of this relation, this union, or oneness, she is interested in all his riches and honour; even if he is a prince, and she before but a poor, despised maid. And this marriage union, St. Paul considers, as resembling the union between Christ and believers, and dwells upon it at large, in Eph. v. 23—32. And as the husband pays his wife's debts; so Christ gave himself for his Church, to pay the ten thousand talents she owed, and to redeem her to himself, to be his wife. To be

z Rom. vii. a Eph. v. 31.

for ever *one with him as he and his Father are one*[b]. And therefore a new convert is said to be *espoused to Christ*[c]. For in the first act of faith, *the match is made* for eternity.

And the whole Church, being but one mystical body, is called the bride, the lamb's wife[d]. And, if the church is the lamb's wife, then the church is God's daughter; God's child; and every true believer is a child of God. As it is written, *as many as received him, to them gave he power*, or a right, *to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name*[e]. Wherefore they *are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ*[f]. And *if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ*[g]. And thus by faith we are united to Christ, and so interested in him and in all blessings through him. And this is the reason that believers, in the constant language of the New Testament, are said to be in Christ. But Christ is God's beloved Son; and so we are accepted in the beloved[h]. And after our persons are accepted, then also our spiritual sacrifices, all our religious duties and holy exercises, in which we *present ourselves to God, as a living sacrifice*[i], *are acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*[k]. And thus we are justified by faith, not as an *holy act*, recommending us to God; but as an *uniting act*, uniting us to Christ. Just as a married wife, being one in law with her husband, is consequently interested in his estate. Not because her marrying her husband was an act of virtue; but because her marriage *made her one with him.*

St. Paul dearly loves, in his writings, to illustrate Gospel-truths by Jewish types; that people, their law, and almost all God's dispensations towards them, being designed by God to be shadows of good things to come. The earthly Canaan was a type of the heavenly; and Isaac, the promised son, was a type of Christ, the promised seed. And as the Israelites were entitled to the earthly Canaan, not by law, but by promise, the promise made to Abraham in Gen. xii. in which God made a grant of all that country to him, and to his seed; so it was not any

b John xvii. 21. *c* 2 Cor. xi. 2. *d* Rev. xxi. 9.
e John i. 12. *f* Gal. iii. 26. *g* Rom. viii. 17.
h Eph. i. 6. *i* Rom. xii. 1. *k* 1 Pet. ii. 5.

goodness in Abraham's seed, but only their relation to Abraham, that gave them a title to that good land. If they were Abraham's seed, they were heirs according to the promise. The law, which was given 430 years after, not being designed to disannul their former title, or to appoint any new terms.—(Rom. iv. 14. Gal. iii. 16, 17, 18.) Even so it is in this case, says the apostle. Our title to the heavenly Canaan is not by law, not by *any goodness* in us, but *if we are Christ's, then are we Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* (*ver.* 29.) *For the promise was to Abraham and to his seed; not to seeds, as of many; but as of one to thy seed, which is Christ.* (*ver.* 16.) And so *Christ was appointed heir of all things.* (*Heb.* i. 2.) Now therefore, if we are Christ's, i. e. if we are in Christ, by faith, we are joint heirs with him. And so our title to the heavenly Canaan results, not from any goodness in us; but only from our relation to Christ. Therefore faith justifies us, not as an *holy act*, recommending us to God; but as an *uniting act*, uniting us to Christ. Just as a descendant of Abraham was entitled to the earthly Canaan by birth; not because it was a virtue to be born of Jewish parents, but only because by this means he was a child of Abraham; and so an *heir according to promise.*

And thus we are *saved by grace through faith, not of works, lest any man should boast*[l]. Not in the least degree, or in any respect, for any goodness in us, considered merely as in ourselves, that there might not be the least ground of boasting; but that all the glory might be given to *free grace* through Jesus Christ[m]. Arminians and Neonomians suppose it is in some degree for some goodness in us; and so take some of the glory to themselves, and give the rest to Christ and free grace. Socinians suppose they are justified wholly for their own goodness; and so take the whole glory to themselves. For they consider Christ on the cross, not as *a sacrifice of atonement*; but only as a martyr. But St. Paul gives quite all the glory to Christ and free grace. And the reason is, because the very best man on earth, afresh merits eternal damnation every hour, according to law, and strict justice; and all his goodness does not make the very least amends. So

l Eph. ii. 8, 9. *m* Eph. i. 6.

the law, which is a school-master, by divine appointment teacheth. O, learn this! and then you will understand the doctrine of *justification by faith*, and know why St. Paul, after all his attainments, so earnestly desired to be *found in Christ* [n].

3. From what has been said, we may see "what views and dispositions are absolutely necessary, in order to a sinner's understandingly and consistently exercising faith in Christ, to the end he may be justified through him. *He must have a view of himself as he is, compared with the law; and of his state, as it is, according to law: and heartily approve the law, as being strictly just.*

As when the children of Israel were about to enter into the land of Canaan, which was a type of heaven, the law was by Moses repeated in the plains of Moab; and just as they took possession of the holy land, they were obliged to signify their hearty approbation of the whole law in its utmost rigour, by answering AMEN, twelve times going, as the Levites denounced the curse; so, before a sinner can come to Christ, and be through him entitled to the heavenly Canaan, *the commandment* must come, be set home on his conscience, that sin may revive, and his guilty state appear, and all his hopes grounded on his own goodness die. Nor can he consistently apply to Christ, the great atonement, unless from his heart he approves the law by which he stands condemned, as strictly just.

As the Israelites had no title to the land of *Canaan by law*, in consequence of *their own righteousness*, being a stiff-necked people, but only by the promise made to Abraham [o]; so it was fit they should see, and be thoroughly sensible, that God did not do those great things for them for their righteousness. And therefore such a method was by God taken with that generation for the space of forty years, as had the most direct tendency to answer this end [p]. And so it is, in a resembling manner with sinners, according to God's ordinary way of preparing them for Christ; and a title to eternal life through him. For *they were our ensamples*, and their history was *written for our instruction* [q].

n Phil. iii. 9. o Gal. iii. 18. p Deut. viii. and ix. q 1 Cor. x. 11.

But inasmuch as the necessity of a preparatory work is denied by some, and the nature of it is still more misunderstood; therefore let us stop here a few minutes, and see what light the subject we have been upon will pour in upon these points.

The necessity of preparation for Christ, must, without dispute, be granted; or we shall undermine the Jewish dispensation, which was by God designed for this very purpose. God intended that the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine into this benighted world; he intended it, in the days of Moses; but the world was not prepared for it then. Therefore, first he gives the law, appoints that to be a school-master, and keeps up the school for near two thousand years; to prepare the way for the Gospel-revelation: that it might be the better understood, the more readily believed and embraced. God saw many preparatory lessons needed to be taught, and that the necessity was so great, as that it was best to delay the Gospel-dispensation, and set up a preparatory school, and appoint a preparatory school-master. So that there needs no further proof of the necessity of preparation, in order to faith in Christ; as the Mosaic dispensation takes this for granted, and was chiefly designed to answer this end[r]. For, as if any man should boldly say, that mankind have no need of a Saviour, it would wholly undermine and overthrow the Gospel-revelation; which takes it for granted that mankind do need a Saviour, and just such a Saviour as is provided; so, if any man should boldly say, that

r Obj. "If every particular sinner needs the law to be his school-master to bring him to Christ, as much as the Jewish nation did, why was the Jewish dispensation ever to be at an end? Why was it not to be perpetual?

Ans. 1. The law of nature, requiring sinless perfection, on pain of eternal damnation, which was the chief part of the law given at Mount Sinai, all the advantages of which new edition, or republication of the law of nature, we still enjoy; I say, this law of nature, as it was in force previous to the Jewish dispensation, among all nations; so it is still. And by it, all nations ever were, and still are, exposed to the everlasting wrath of God, as the Jews were by their law. Nor is there any escape but by Christ. Now here is a perpetual school-master. Rom i. 18. and iii. 9. 19. Acts iv. 12.

2. But there is now no need to offer the blood of bulls and goats, or constantly to attend to and look upon any other of the Jewish shadows; because Christ the substance is come. Therefore the ceremonial law is to be no longer in force.

nothing is wanting to prepare a sinner for Christ, it would undermine and overthrow the Mosaic dispensation, which takes it for granted, that sinners did need preparation, and just such a preparation as that dispensation was suited to work.

Now, read through the whole law of Moses, with the history interspersed, in those sacred books, of God's dealings with the children of Israel those forty years in the wilderness; and it will appear that the whole is admirably suited to realize the Being and perfections of God; to show us exactly how he looks upon himself, and how he stands affected towards sin. "I AM THE LORD," he says, an hundred times; he speaks it with the majesty of a God, and he shows an infinite regard to his own honour, and expects all to love and worship him, to fear and obey him, on pain of death. If his *anger waxes hot*, behold! *the earth opens her mouth, and swallows up hundreds!* Or, *the plague rages, to kill thousands in a moment!* And if he is pleased to have mercy, and not execute all his wrath, it is like an absolute sovereign over criminals that have no claim.—*I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy: and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion* [s]. Thus they are in the hands of a sovereign God. Meanwhile, the law teaches that no mortal can, on the account of his own goodness, be approved of God, unless he is perfectly holy in heart and life; and that the least defect merits and exposes to eternal damnation. And yet at the same time, forbids a complaining thought, and obliges to an hearty approbation. Nor could the poor, guilty, helpless Jew, without an hearty approbation of the law, with any consistency, lay his hands on the head of the consecrated animal, and present it to die in his room; and yet, *this was the only door of hope:* for, *without shedding of blood, there was no remission.* And now, it is plain what views and dispositions all this, effectually realized to the mind, and set home upon the heart, was suited to work. "It would effectually awaken his conscience, and bring the Jew to feel what he was by nature, and by practice, in the sight of God, and

s Exod. xxxiii. 19.

compared with his law; and what he stood exposed unto, without any possible way of escape, but by the blood of atonement; which yet he could not, consistently, have recourse unto: unless first he heartily approved the law, in all its rigour, as strictly just." And herein, as in a glass, we may see the true nature of that preparation which is necessary in order to exercise faith in Christ.

And impartial reason approves it all. For is it fit the sinner should be pardoned, before he sees and owns what he is, and wherein, and how much he has been to blame? Or is it fit, the sinner should be pardoned, till he clearly sees he deserves to be punished? Or is it fit, a sinner should be pardoned, by God the lawgiver, before he sees and feels the law is just, by which he stands condemned; so as to cease complaining; yea, so as actually to approve, justify, and acquiesce in it, as quite right and altogether equitable? Or can a sinner till then see any proper and rational ground for an atonement? Or discern his need of Christ? Or see the true beauty and glory of the Gospel-way of life? Or heartily acquiesce in it?

Or may not these be laid down as maxims, near or quite self-evident: I must see wherein I have been to blame, and how much, before I can see wherein and how much I need a pardon. I must see, I altogether deserve the threatened punishment; before I can see it altogether free grace, to be delivered from it. I must see it, reasonable, fit, and beautiful, that sin should be so punished as the law threatens; before I can see the law, reasonable, fit and beautiful, in threatening so to punish sin. I must see the law reasonable, fit, and beautiful, before I can be satisfied at heart, that it was ever best it should be executed upon the sinner, or upon Christ his surety. I must see it, to be of infinite importance, that God be honoured, and sin discountenanced, before the severity of the law will appear beautiful, or the death of Christ needful, or the way of life through his blood glorious, or I heartily approve of the law, or cordially acquiesce in the Gospel. I must heartily aquiesce in the Gospel-way of life, or I cannot sincerely, and from the heart, fall in with it.

Now these, and each of these particulars, are essential to the exercise of faith in Christ, for pardon and justification. Nor need any thing further be added, in order to determine exactly the nature of that preparation, which is necessary to the exercise of faith in Christ. Precisely how much of this is wrought in the true convert, previous to regeneration, and goes into the idea of what is called legal humiliation, and how much is consequent upon regeneration and divine light, and belongs to what is called evangelical humiliation, I shall not stand to determine [t]. But this I desire may be remembered, that there can be no exercise of faith in Christ for pardon and justification, by a new convert, or by an old saint, without these views and tempers at least, for the substance of them [u]. They are so essential to justifying faith, that it cannot exist without them. Which after all that

t It may not be amiss to add here, that *previous to regeneration*, while the sinner is without any seed of grace in his heart, 1 John iii. 9. *dead in sin*, Eph. ii. 1. at *enmity with God* and his law, Rom. viii. 7. he may, through the law set home upon his conscience, by the spirit of God, be made to see and own, as in the sight of God; 1. That there is no goodness in his heart, that he is quite dead in sin, an enemy to God and his law. 2. That he is, in himself, entirely helpless, absolutely lost and undone. 3. That God is not obliged to help or save him, for any thing he can do. 4. That he is in the hands of God, who is at liberty to have mercy on him, or not, as he pleases. 5. That it is a just and righteous thing in God to cast him off for ever.

But it is after regeneration that other things come into view; such as, 1. The transcendent beauty and excellency of the divine nature.—2. The beauty of the law.—3. The glory of the Gospel-way of life.—All which lay a foundation for—4. A supreme love to God, an hearty approbation of the law, a cordial acquiescence in the Gospel, an actual compliance with that way of life, &c.—Besides that, now the justice of God in the damnation of the sinner, and the reasonableness of his acting as a sovereign, in the salvation of those that are saved, appear quite in a new light. They appear even to be glorious, 2 Cor. iii. 7. Matt. xi. 25.

u There is the same necessity of these views and tempers, in order to the exercise of faith in Christ, at any particular season, through the course of a man's life, as there is at his first conversion. The same reason that makes them necessary to any act of faith, makes them necessary to every act of faith. Indeed, they become habitual to the true believer, who daily *lives by faith on the Son of God*. For, it may be observed, that those legal terrors, and all those struggles and workings of the sinner's heart, while unregenerate, which are commonly experienced previous to a saving conversion, are left out of the above representation; as being, in a great measure, peculiar to that season, and not essential to any act of faith, but only naturally arising from the sinner's then present state and temper.

has been said, seems too plain and evident, to need any further proof. Therefore,

4. What has been said may serve to determine these following things, concerning *the nature of justifying faith.*

1. In general, it implies an hearty approbation of the law, and an hearty acquiescence in the Gospel; as being suited to honour God, and discountenance sin. And therefore, more particularly,

2. It implies a conviction, and some realizing sense of the infinite greatness and glory of God; as also a supreme love to God, and regard to his honour. For otherwise, we can never approve the law from the heart; nor will it ever appear beautiful, or agreeable, that God's honour is so much consulted and set by both in the law and Gospel.

3. It implies regeneration. Or, that a new spiritual divine nature, taste, and relish, is communicated to us from God. For there is no principle in unrenewed nature, from which a man may have such a supreme regard to God and his honour, as from the heart to approve the law, in requiring sinless perfection on pain of eternal damnation. The law never appeared glorious to an unregenerate heart. But every unregenerate heart is at enmity against it. Rom. viii. 7.

A true saint, yea, the most holy man on earth, according to law and strict justice, deserves damnation as much, yea, more than he did at his first conversion, considered merely as in himself. Not that he is at present so bad a man as once he was. No, by no means. But because his present goodness makes no amends for any of his sins committed before conversion, or since. So that if he was to be dealt with according to law strictly, without any relation to Christ, he must be accountable for all his sins before conversion, and for all sins since conversion. And the sins of a true convert deserve damnation, as well as the sins of the unconverted. And so, according to law, considered merely as in himself, he runs daily deeper into debt, and so stands in still greater need of Christ and *free grace.* For that popish notion, that the goodness of a saint makes some amends in the sight of God for his sins, is inconsistent both with the law and with the Gospel. For then a saint might possibly be so good, as to make full amends for all his sins; and so stand in no need of Christ. Yea, the church of Rome think, upon this same hypothesis, that some saints are so good as not only to make full amends to God for their own sins, but that, over and above, they have some to spare for their poor neighbours, who have not enough for themselves. And it is well if the hearts of some protestants are not tinged with this Popish doctrine.

4. It implies a conviction, and some realising sense of the infinite evil of sin, as it is against a God of infinite glory. For otherwise it cannot appear as an agreeable, amiable thing in God to punish it with eternal damnation. And so the law cannot be really approved of and liked.

5. It implies true repentance; in that we are thus heartily turned against sin to God, to be on his side, to approve and justify his law, and stand for his honour. For now the rebel is become, and has the heart of a loyal subject. And so,

6. It implies a principle of new obedience. Yea,

7. It implies the seeds of every moral virtue, and every Christian grace. For they are comprised in a hearty approbation of the law, and acquiescence in the Gospel. And so,

8. It implies, virtually a preparedness of heart, to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Christ, and be true to him at all adventures. A character absolutely essential to every true Christian. *Luke* xiv. 25—33. And so, beyond all dispute,

9. Justifying faith is an *HOLY ACT*. And yet,

10. It implies, that we have no dependence, no, not the least, on any goodness, of any kind which is inherent in us, to recommend us to God's favour and acceptance. For,

11. It implies that we see and feel, that eternal damnation is, at that moment our proper due, according to law and reason, according to strict and impartial justice. Yea,

12. It implies that we are so far from a disposition to think hard of God, and complain of his law as too severe, that, on the contrary, we are disposed to think well of God, and to think the law to be just what it should be, quite right, altogether right, just, and fair. Yea,

13. It implies that the law, although a ministration of death, appears to be glorious. For otherwise, it cannot appear fit and beautiful, that the honour of it should be secured, by the blood of the SON OF GOD. And yet, unless this does appear fit and beautiful, the Gospel-way of life cannot be heartily acquiesced in.

14. And if the law, although a ministration of death, appears to be glorious, as it is suited to honour God and discountenance sin; the Gospel will appear much more exceed-

ingly glorious: as being wisely calculated, not only to answer these ends, to even better advantage than the law; but also to humble and save the sinner, and glorify grace. And therefore, in the exercise of faith, the Gospel-way of life by free grace through Jesus Christ, will be admired, loved, esteemed, rejoiced in, as being full of the manifold wisdom of God; while we behold how satan is disappointed, God exalted, the law honoured, God's authority established, sin punished, the sinner humbled and saved, and grace glorified, all at once.

15. Justifying faith, these views and tempers being thus supposed and implied, consists more especially in a cordial compliance with the Gospel-way of life, by *trusting in and entirely depending upon Jesus Christ*: that *Lamb of God*, typically slain in daily sacrifices *from the foundation of the world*; who in the fulness of time *bare our sins in his own body on the tree: died the just for the unjust*: being set forth, as the bullock of old, *to be a propitiation for sin, that God might be just*: and who is now *ascended into heaven, to appear* as our *great high-priest, in the presence of God: and is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him.* So the pious Jew, with an humble and broken heart, laid his hands on the head of the bullock, or the goat, which he had presented before the Lord, to die in his room. The consecrated animal was slain, his blood sprinkled, his carcass burnt, and so atonement was made. *Without shedding of blood there was no remission.* Even so now we are justified by FAITH IN CHRIST'S BLOOD. i. e. by an entire trust, dependance, reliance on the atonement, merits, and mediation of Christ, for pardon and acceptance in the sight of God, and for eternal life. This FAITH IN CHRIST'S BLOOD, is St. Paul's definition of justifying faith, in *Rom.* iii. 25.—And,

16. It implies *a firm belief of the truth of the Gospel*. For otherwise a sinner so wide awake, would not dare to venture his soul and eternal concerns thus wholly and entirely upon it, without any other dependence. And lastly,

17. It implies *a supreme value for the favour of God*

above all the world. As this will naturally arise from a sense of his supreme dignity, greatness, and glory.

These things are all so easy to be understood, and so evidently true, from what has been already said, that they need neither further illustration nor further proof.

And thus, from the nature of the law, and of the Gospel; from the very frame and constitution of these two dispensations, we learn the nature of the preparatory work, and the nature of saving faith. And nothing can be more satisfactory than to see these two things, which lay the foundation for all experimental religion, i. e. for all real religion, thus growing up, as it were, out of the whole bible, not resulting from here and there a detached sentence; but the natural and necessary consequence of both dispensations, jointly viewed: and this joint view set in a divine light, by the great apostle of the Gentiles, before our eyes. And thus, the religion of the heart answers exactly to the bible; as face answers to face in a glass. As it is written, *we all beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image*[x]: i. e. beholding the glory of the Lord, as shining in the law; which, although a ministration of death, was glorious: and in the Gospel, which much exceeds in glory, we are changed into the same image, are transformed into an exact resemblance, into a frame of heart that is exactly answerable. This image is begun at conversion, and it increases *from glory to glory*, by the continual influences of the *Spirit of the Lord*; who begins, carries on, and completes this glorious renovation.

And from these things, it is evident, that justifying faith is entirely of a different nature from any thing an unregenerate man experiences; who has neither these views, nor these tempers, which are implied in it, and properly belong to its essence. And accordingly, we find that he who saith, *he that believeth not shall be damned*[y]; saith also, *except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*[z].—And particularly,

We may now, in the light of all these truths, see as in the light of noon-day, that for a man merely *to believe that his*

x 2 Cor. iii. 18. y Mark xvi. 16. z John iii. 3.

sins are pardoned, and *that God loves him*, has in it nothing of the nature of justifying faith; but is altogether a different thing.

1. Justifying faith is a grace, it is an holy act. But there is nothing of the nature of holiness, merely in believing my sins are forgiven. Yea, many a graceless sinner believes so.

2. Justifying faith is a saving grace. But salvation is no where promised to a man's firmly believing his sins are forgiven.

3. Justifying faith is wrought, and can be wrought in the heart by none but the *Spirit of God*. But this belief may be the effect of a man's own presumption, or of the devil's delusion.

4. Justifying faith implies all the seeds of holiness in it, and so naturally lays a foundation for a holy life. But this belief, as there is no holiness in it, so it may naturally lay a foundation for a wicked life; as it tends to embolden a graceless heart in sin.

5. Justifying faith implies regeneration, and cannot exist without it. But this belief may be without it. There is no necessity of regeneration in order to its existence.

6. Justifying faith implies a thorough conviction of sin. But a thorough conviction of sin would be a hinderance to this faith. If they saw how bad they were, they would not be so apt to believe their sins forgiven. Yea, thorough conviction would effectually prevent this belief, and keep them from this delusion, and show them their need of Christ indeed. Sudden terrors, without any deep conviction, are preparation enough for this belief. Yea, the Moravians, who think this belief true faith, are against any convictions, or terrors, as doing more hurt than good.

7. Justifying faith supposes, that eternal damnation is seen to be justly due; nor can there be an act of faith without it. But deluded sinners may be strong in this belief, when quite secure in sin, and at the greatest remove from a sense of their desert of damnation.

8. Justifying faith supposes, that the law is approved of, and loved. But this belief may be in an Antinomian heart, that hates the law.

9. Justifying faith supposes the way of salvation by free grace through Jesus Christ, is rightly understood, as it results herefrom. But a right understanding of the Gospel-way of life is not needful to this belief; as it does not take its rise from the Gospel, but from a new revelation. Yea, a clear insight into the Gospel-way of life, would do more hurt than good; as it would tend to convince them of their delusion.

10. Justifying faith supposes, that we believe the Gospel to be true. But that belief a heretic may have. Yea, a professed infidel may have it: a Turk, or a Jew, may as firmly believe that his sins are forgiven, as any Christian. And doubtless some of them do.

11. Justifying faith supposes that the Gospel is heartily approved of and loved. But this belief is consistent with an habitual enmity to the Gospel, as well as the law.

12. Justifying faith hath for its object, Jesus Christ. But this belief has for its object no being; but only a supposed fact. viz. that my sins are forgiven.

13. Justifying faith is that by which we are justified. But this belief supposes the man was justified, that his sins were actually pardoned before he believed.—Therefore,

14. As justifying faith is founded only on truth; so this belief is founded only on falsehood.—And,

15. As justifying faith is founded only on truths revealed in the written word; so this belief is only on a supposed fact, no where revealed in the written word. Yea, contrary to the written word, which teaches, that before faith our sins are not pardoned; but *the wrath of God abideth on us* [a].

16. Justifying faith is wrought by the spirit of God, enlightening our minds, spiritually to understand the truths of the Gospel already revealed in the written word. But this belief is begotten by an immediate revelation of a fact never revealed before. Yea, of a fact not true.

17. Justifying faith attaches the heart to that whole system of truths revealed in the Gospel. But this belief leaves the heart open to error, and inclines it to Antinomianism.

a John iii. 18. 36.

18. It is every sinner's duty, that hears the Gospel, to believe on Christ with a justifying faith. But it is not every sinner's duty to believe his sins are forgiven.

19. An aversion to the exercise of true faith in Christ, is a sin in all cases. But a backwardness to believe his sins are forgiven, is no sin, in one who is unpardoned.

20. Justifying faith, the stronger it is, so much the better always. But this belief, the stronger it is in a self-deceived hypocrite, so much the worse.

21. Justifying faith works by love to God, as glorious and amiable in himself. But this belief works only by self-love. As the Israelites, at the Red sea, were from self-love filled with joy, in a sense of their deliverance, without any true love to God in their hearts; so a man may be filled with joy, in a firm belief that his sins are forgiven; and yet be as destitute of true grace, as were that ungodly generation to whom God sware in his wrath, that they should never enter into his rest.

22. The true believer naturally makes holiness of heart and life his evidence of a good estate, as this is the natural fruit of true faith. But this belief naturally leads men to make, what they call the immediate witness of the Spirit, their only fundamental evidence; as all their faith, and all their religion arises from it, and is entirely dependent on it: and disposes them to think sanctification a very dark, unsteady, uncertain evidence; their own religious frames being such.

23. The first and fundamental article of a true believer's creed, and that on which all his religion and hopes are built, is, that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God [b]. But the first and fundamental article of the other sort, and that on which all their religion and hopes are built, is that the immediate discovery they have had of the love of God, and that their sins are pardoned, is from God. Shake them here, and you shake their very foundation. Destroy this belief, and you destroy all their religion and all their hopes, and leave them quite uncertain in every thing.

24. In justifying faith the believer is married to Christ, becomes one with him; and so is interested in all his benefits.

b. Eph. ii. 20.

But in this belief, they are persuaded that the benefits of Christ are theirs, without being ever married to him. To render this perfectly familiar to the weakest capacity, let me add, that the Church, in Scripture, is called *the bride, the Lamb's wife:* and being thus united to Christ, is considered as being IN CHRIST, and so interested in all his benefits. Now there arises this question, *What is the nature of that faith, whereby the soul is united to Christ?* When a woman is married to a man, there is, 1. The transaction itself, in and by which they are married. 2. A consciousness of the transaction at that time. 3. A remembrance of it afterwards. 4. Duties and privileges flowing from it. So it is in true faith. But what if a woman should take it in her head without ever being married to believe, 1. Such a man is my husband. 2. He has paid all my debts and given me all his estate? *Objection.* No, but *you are not married to him. Answer.* Yes, I am. For marriage consists in believing he is my husband, and has paid all my debts. Might it not in this case be affirmed, *Believing I am married, is not the whole essence of the marriage-covenant, nor any part of it?* So it is equally plain and certain, that *believing that Christ is mine, and that my sins are pardoned, is not the whole essence of justifying faith, nor any part of it*[c]. To proceed,

5. From what has been said, the following *case of conscience* may be easily and safely resolved. viz. "A man is greatly at a loss about the state of his soul. He has been awakened, and has been comforted, and has frequently had something like communion with God. He makes conscience of all his ways. And yet for several reasons is at a great loss,

c Although it appears, so clear a case, that justifying faith, and a *mere belief that my sins are pardoned*, are two distinct, different things, in their whole nature and effects; so that it seems strange, how they should be taken for one and the same thing, unless where men are biassed by their own corrupt experiences: yet still I have charity for some divines, who seem to think, that justifying faith consists in such a belief, hoping they have a better faith in their hearts, than that which they describe in their books. But their being good men, does not make this notion of faith ever the better; but on the contrary, the danger of its doing mischief in the world, is greatly increased, when it is espoused and recommended by men of great names. And therefore, there is the greater reason, and the more need, so particularly to point out its difference from *true faith.*

whether what he has experienced be a common, or *saving work of the Spirit*. He opens his case to his Christian friends; they are afraid to speak comfortably, lest it should settle him down on a false foundation, if all still be wrong. But they dare by no means speak discouraging; because, according to his account, his case is hopeful, although not clear. So they know not what to say. Now what is the best advice that can be given to a man in such a case?"

Tell him, that although he is at a loss about his state, yet these three things he may be certain of: they are true, and may be depended upon, viz. he is a sinner; the Gospel is true; and it is his duty to comply with it. Thus tenderly address him:

"Although you are conscientious in all your ways, yet you know you have been, and still are, a sinner. Your heart is not what it ought to be. Your temper towards God, Christ, and divine things, is not as it should be. Nor do you take that pains in the use of means, in prayer, meditation, keeping the heart, &c. as you might. You are to blame. You are wholly to blame. God is righteous in his present dealings with you. Yea, you deserve infinitely worse than all this, even to be sent immediately to hell. Wherefore, see it, own it, come down and lie in the dust at the foot of God, and learn habitually to understand, realize, and approve of God's law as holy, just, and good.

"And as it is true that you are a sinner, and deserve hell; so it is equally true that Christ has died for sinners, and God is ready, through him, to be reconciled to all that believe. And the truth of these glad tidings may be depended upon. And you cannot reasonably desire, that God should be reconciled to you, in any other way than this, which is so perfectly adapted and suited to honour God, discountenance sin, humble the sinner, and glorify grace.

"Now, whether you was ever savingly converted no not, yet it is equally your duty in a sense that hell is your proper due, and that you are absolutely helpless and undone in yourself, and in a firm belief of the truth of the Gospel, to apply to the great atonement of Christ, and to look to the free grace of God through him, for mercy to pardon, and

grace to help, according to all your needs; and through Christ to devote and give up yourself to God, to love him, live to him, and to be for ever his. And in this way your state may be cleared up, and your doubts removed."

OBJ. *But is there not danger, that all this may settle him down on a false hope; if as yet he never was converted?*

ANS. 1. If he never was converted, then he never yet heartily approved of the law, or really believed the Gospel, or ever heartily complied with it. Therefore, putting him upon these things, will tend to convince him that he never did; for it will tend to show him that it is not in his heart to do it; and consequently that there is no seed of grace there: but that he is quite dead in sin: and that therefore unless *he is born again, he shall never see the kingdom of God.* I say, it will tend to convince him of all this; and if after all he remains unconvinced, the fault will be his own.

2. If he has been savingly converted, then this method of dealing with him will be like pointing out the way to one lost in a wilderness. He likes the directions; he takes them, he hastens towards the road, he finds it, he remembers it; he rejoices, and takes better heed to keep the right path through the rest of his journey. For the true convert, although under great backslidings, has still the root of the matter in him; has it in his heart to justify the law, to be pleased with the Gospel-way of life, and to look to free grace through Jesus Christ for all things. Like Jonah in the belly of hell, when the weeds wrapt about his head, and he was ready to say, that he was cast out of God's sight; and his soul fainted within him. Then he remembered God, and looked again towards his holy temple, where God dwelt in the cloud of glory over the mercy-seat, under which the law was laid up in the ark, in the most holy place of the HOLY OF HOLIES, into which the high-priest entered once a year with the blood of atonement. He looked hither; his former ideas of God revived: he remembered the Lord: and a sense of God, as there manifested, encouraged him to pray. He prayed, and God heard him, and delivered him out of all his distresses. And many a poor broken hearted backslider has done in like manner, and found it good to draw near to the

Lord. And thus the truth clear held forth to the conscience, as it tends to kill the false hopes of a self-deceived hypocrite; so it tends to awaken and encourage the true saint to such exercises of grace as may be plainly discernible, and lay a foundation for a full assurance. To conclude,

6. From what has been said, "the true state of the Christless sinner appears in a clear light." For, while we view the sinner, as under a law that requires sinless perfection under pain of eternal damnation, we may easily see how the case stands with him. He is under the curse; he cannot obtain deliverance, by any works of righteousness, which he can do; he daily runs deeper into debt; he has no claim to any mercy, of any kind, temporal or spiritual; till he sees this to be his case, and heartily approves the law, by which he stands condemned, it is impossible he should see his need of Christ, or approve of, or fall in with, the way of salvation by him.

"He is under the curse." *For as many as are of the works of the law*, i. e. of a disposition to trust in their own doings, (as all are, until *through the law, they are become dead to the law,*) *are under the curse.* And that as really as if Christ had never died. For Christ will *profit them nothing*, will be of *no effect to them*, as it is written, *behold, I Paul, say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing*[d]. *Christ is become of no effect unto you; whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace*[e]. Not that circumcision, simply and in itself, proved them to have no interest in Christ, (for Paul circumcised Timothy[f].) But if they were circumcised under a notion of recommending themselves to God by their duties, and obtaining the favour of God by their own righteousness, as was professedly the case with some of them, then it was a sufficient evidence of their temper, and of their state. They were *of the works of the law*, and so *under the curse*[g]. Wherefore, let it be observed, that according to St Paul, every self-righteous sinner is out of Christ, and every sinner out of Christ is under the curse. Being actually under a law which requires sinless perfection on pain of eternal damnation, he is by this law doomed to

d Gal. v. 2. *e* Gal. v. 4. *f* Acts xvi. 3. *g* Gal. iii. 10.

eternal destruction. For they are *debtors to do the whole law*[h]; and therefore the curse takes hold of them, if they fail in any one point. Therefore,

"The Christless sinner cannot obtain deliverance by any works of righteousness which he can do." Because nothing short of sinless perfection will entitle him to life. And it is too late for this. He has sinned already; and so is a lost creature; nor is there any hopes in his case, on account of any thing he can do; he is quite undone in himself; and his case hourly grows worse. For,

"He continually runs deeper into debt." As his sins are constantly multiplying, and his guilt increasing, and nothing done, in the least, to make amends; so he is constantly *treasuring up wrath*[i].

"And he has no claim to any mercy of any kind, temporal or spiritual," he can claim nothing by law; unless he had fulfilled the law. And he can claim nothing by Christ, unless he were in Christ. And so having no claim by law or Gospel, he has no right to any thing. No right to his life.—That is forfeited, and all the good things of this world are forfeited. And his soul is forfeited. Yea, he is actually under the sentence of condemnation[k]. It is true, he is reprieved; but it is only of God's sovereign pleasure. He dies, he drops into hell, when God pleases. He has no claim to the day of grace, or means of grace, or to any help from God. Hell is his due; he can claim nothing better. Hell is his present due, and he can claim no forbearance. In every respect, he lies at God's sovereign mercy.

"When he sees this to be his case, and heartily approves the law by which he stands condemned;" then, and not till then, is there any door of hope, or any way of escape. But he is shut up under sin[l]: and bound down under wrath[m]. For until this, it is impossible he should understand, or believe, or approve of, or acquiesce in, the Gospel-way of life, Or trust in Christ, as therein set forth.

Unless he thus heartily approves of the law, he cannot un-

h Gal. v. 3. *i* Rom. ii. 5. *k* John iii. 18.
l Gal. iii. 22. *m* John iii. 36.

derstand the Gospel-way of life. For while it does not appear best, that sin should be so punished, he cannot understand why Christ died. He cannot understand what good end needed to be answered, or was answered, by his death.—He cannot understand his need of him, or what it is to believe on him. It is *all hid from him*[n]. It is all profound darkness. And all the seeds of infidelity are in his heart.

He cannot really believe the Gospel to be from God. For while he does not see what ends need to be answered, it must appear incredible that the Son of God should become incarnate and die.

He cannot approve of the Gospel. For this would imply an hearty approbation of the law. If it does not appear reasonable, fit, and beautiful, that he should be punished as the law threatens; it cannot appear reasonable, fit, and beautiful, that the Son of God should bear the curse in his stead. If the law is too severe, it ought to be repealed.

Therefore, he cannot acquiesce, heartily acquiesce, in such a way of life. It does not suit his heart. He is not pleased with it.

And so he can have no genuine disposition to look to, and trust in Christ as set forth in the Gospel, the whole plan being virtually disliked, while it does not appear best, and a thing desirable, that sin should be punished with so great severity. Therefore he must remain in profound darkness, shut up under sin, bound down under wrath, and in fearful expectations of everlasting destruction, until his *uncircumcised heart is humbled*[o].

But no sooner is the sinner brought heartily to approve the law, under a sense of the infinite greatness and glory of God, so as sincerely to say, AMEN, to it; but every thing appears in a different light. The controversy is now at an end. The enmity is slain. The sinner, the rebel, is turned to be on God's side, is become a friend; and even rejoices to see God's honour so effectually secured. And the Gospel is understood, believed, approved of, acquiesced in; yea, with all his heart he complies with this way of life. Trusting in

n Matt. vi. 35. o Lev. xxvi. 41.

Christ, *as set forth to be a propitiation for sin, that God might be just,* and yet justify and save sinners through him [p]. In consequence of which, he is *justified, hath peace with God, and rejoiceth in hope of the glory of God* [q]. And being now *dead to sin, he can live no longer therein* [r]. For *through the law he is dead to the law, that he might live to God* [s]. And he is *married to Christ, that he might bring forth fruit to God* [t]. And being now a *child of God, the spirit of adoption is sent forth into his heart, crying, Abba, Father* [u]. And so he *follows God as a dear child* [x]. And from this day, and forward *is kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation* [y]. *Growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ* [z]. And all from *the good pleasure of God's will, to the praise of the glory of his grace* [a]. Amen.

p Rom. iii. 25, 26. q Rom. v. 1, 2. r Rom. vi. 2. s Gal. ii. 19.
t Rom. vii. 4. u Gal. iv. 6. x Eph. v. 1. y 1 Pet. i. 5.
z 2 Pet. iii. 18. a Eph. i. 5, 6.

A

BLOW AT THE ROOT

OF

THE REFINED ANTINOMIANISM

OF THE PRESENT AGE.

WHEREIN

THAT MAXIM, WHICH IS SO ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL TO THEIR SCHEME, THAT IT CANNOT SUBSIST WITHOUT IT, LAID DOWN BY MR. MARSHALL;

VIZ.

THAT IN JUSTIFYING FAITH, "WE BELIEVE THAT TO BE TRUE WHICH IS NOT TRUE BEFORE WE BELIEVE IT,"

THOROUGHLY EXAMINED;

MR. WILSON'S ARGUMENTS IN ITS DEFENCE,

CONSIDERED AND ANSWERED;

AND

THE WHOLE ANTINOMIAN CONTROVERSY,

AS IT NOW STANDS,

BROUGHT TO A SHORT ISSUE,

AND RENDERED PLAIN TO THE MEANEST CAPACITY.

"Go through, go through the gates; prepare you the way of the people; cast up, cast up the high-way; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people."——ISAI. lxii. 10.

ADVERTISEMENT.

IN a piece, entitled, "Letters and Dialogues, upon the nature of love to God, faith in Christ, assurance of a title to Eternal Life," printed at Boston, New-England, 1759, re-printed, London, 1761, Mr. Marshal's account of justifying faith, was taken notice of, viz. That in justifying faith, "we believe that to be true, which is not true before we believe it;" and twelve queries were stated on the point. To vindicate that whole system of religion, which is founded in, and results from, this kind of faith, two volumes were printed in London, 1762, containing about 300 pages each; entitled, Palæmon's Creed revived and examined. By David Wilson. This author, among other things, has undertaken to prove, that in justifying faith, "we believe that to be true, which is not true before we believe it." The following pages are designed as an answer to this gentleman, on that point. And if that point, which is essential to their scheme, and the root of all the mischief, can be proved to be wrong; their whole scheme is overthrown. This little pamphlet then means to bring to a short issue, a controversy which has been the source of infinite mischief to the souls of mankind.

J. BELLAMY.

Bethlem, Jan. 14, 1763.

A BLOW

AT

THE ROOT OF THE REFINED ANTINOMIANISM

OF THE PRESENT AGE.

THE principal design of writing on controverted points, is to assist the reader, by holding forth clear light, to come to a well grounded judgment, touching the point in dispute. And to this end we should distinguish between things that differ, state the point in dispute, with great exactness; and then present to the reader the arguments on the one side and the other, of the question in debate, and leave him to judge for himself. Accordingly, in these pages I shall, 1. Make some needful distinctions; the neglect of which has occasioned no small confusion in this controversy, about the nature of justifying faith. 2. State the question now to be disputed, with great exactness. 3. Offer arguments against, and 4. Consider the arguments in favour of the position, which contains the question in dispute; and then leave every reader to judge for himself. The distinctions to be made, are these,

1. There is an essential difference between justification in the sight of God, and a persuasion in our own minds that we are justified. One is the act of God our judge; the other is the act of our own minds; as is self-evident. God's act must of necessity be, in order of nature, at least before our act. We must be justified before we can know that we are justified. For a thing must exist before its existence can be perceived. To say otherwise, is an express contradiction.

2. We are justified by faith alone, and that whether we know our faith to be of the right kind, or not. But we are assured of our justification, by a consciousness of our faith and other Christian graces, and by knowing they are of the right kind. We are justified without respect to any thing in us, or about us, considered as a recommending qualification; simply *by free grace through the redemption that is in*

Jesus Christ. Our union with Christ is the foundation of our interest in him, his atonement and merits; and so of our title to pardon, justification, and eternal life, according to the Gospel. Faith alone, is that on our part whereby we are united to Christ and become one with him, and so that alone by which we are justified. A consciousness in our own minds, that we have true faith, and those other Christian graces which are connected with it, and always accompany it, is that alone by which we can know that we are justified. So that while we are justified simply on the account of Christ's righteousness, we can know that we are in fact justified merely by a consciousness of our own inherent graces; even as a poor woman is made rich simply on her husband's estate, with whom she becomes one in the eye of the law by marriage: but she knows her title to her husband's estate, only as she knows that she was married to him, and actually continues to be his wife.

3. There is an essential difference between a full assurance, that those who receive Christ, and come to God in his name, shall be pardoned, justified, and have eternal life: and a consciousness that I do receive Christ, and come to God in his name, and am consequently pardoned, justified, and entitled to eternal life. That those who receive Christ and come to God in his name, shall be pardoned, justified, and have eternal life, is plainly and expressly revealed in the Gospel, and was true before I was born. And it appears to be true to every one, who understands the Gospel aright, and believes it with all his heart. But I must actually understand the Gospel, believe it with all my heart, and in the belief of it actually receive Christ, and come to God in his name, before I am justified; and so before I can be conscious to myself that I have so acted, and that consequently I am pardoned, justified, and entitled to eternal life.

4. Although justification in the sight of God, must of necessity be in order of nature before our knowledge that we are justified; because a thing must exist before its existence can be perceived by the mind: yet it is not impossible that a justified believer may know his justification soon, from an in-

ward consciousness of his receiving Christ, and coming to God in his name, and from a consciousness of all the Christian graces, which are connected with and do always accompany true faith. At conversion, a sinner is *brought out of darkness into marvellous light*, and *beholding the glory of the Lord, is changed into the same image;* and may of course in the time of it, in all ordinary cases, be conscious of the change. And the greater the change is, the more conscious will he be of it. No man can prove but that divine light may possibly be imparted in so great a degree, and the change be so clear, that at once it may be known to be a saving change. I do not say, that it is always, or that it is ordinarily so, at present; but I am willing to grant that it may be so. From many expressions in the New Testament, I am inclined to think it was commonly so in the apostolic age. The three thousand on the day of pentecost, not only *received the word gladly*, but immediately began to spend their time in *praising God*, Acts ii. 41. 47. and converts in that age in general *being justified by faith, had peace with God*, and *rejoiced in hope of the glory of God.* Rom. v. 1, 2. *Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye,* (one and all,) *rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory,* 1 Pet. i. 8. Nor do we read of one saint in the New Testament, who doubted of his being in a justified state: nor have we any reason from the writings of the New Testament, to think but that assurance of their good estate was universally enjoyed by all true believers in the apostolic age.

This consideration inclines me to entertain charitable thoughts of the first reformers, that their hearts might be right, although it could be proved that they made assurance of the essence of faith; as it is affirmed by some, that they did. For they were in the heat of dispute with the Papists who denied that assurance was at all attainable in this life. Good men among the first reformers might be conscious to themselves, that they had had assurance from the very time of their conversion; and might observe from the apostolic writings, that it used to be so with the apostolic converts, and might observe it to be so with their converts; and so, through want of proper attention to the nature of things,

might be led to affirm, that assurance itself is of the essence of justifying faith. And by that one false maxim, be insensibly led into many other mistakes. But *the assembly of divines at Westminster*, who sat about an hundred years after the reformation, time having been had meanwhile to look more carefully into things, and to distinguish between things that differ, left assurance out of their definition of justifying faith, in their *confession of faith*; larger and shorter catechisms. Nay, they even expressly affirm, in their larger catechism, in answer to question 81, "That assurance of grace and salvation are not of the essense of faith." For while it was affirmed that assurance was of the essence of faith by the protestant preachers, two things would constantly happen, it may reasonably be supposed, which would tend to convince them that they were wrong, viz. 1. Many of their seeming converts who appeared to be full of the strongest assurance of the pardon of their sins, would apostatize and fall away to open wickedness, before their eyes: as it has been with many in our day.

2. And their adversaries, the papists, who hated all assurance of salvation in general, as some do in our day, would take the advantage of their mistake, and make such objections against them, as they could not answer. Which, when the heat of the controversy was a little over, and the protestant party had had time impartially to weigh things, (loath as men naturally are to give up a point they have once espoused,) they would feel themselves obliged to do it in this case. Accordingly it came to pass, within about an hundred years, that protestant divines in general gave up that notion, and defined faith in a very different manner; as we may see in the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of the assembly of divines at Westminster, and yet retained the doctrine of assurance, and asserted it in the strongest language, but not as being of the essence of faith, but as resulting "from the inward evidence of those graces, unto which the promises are made." And in New-England, (which was settled about that time,) that notion has been, from the very first settlement of it to this day, universally exploded, by all our divines of note. Nay, I never heard of but one single minister in New-Eng-

land, who appeared in print to defend the notion, that assurance is of the essence of faith; and he is a minister over a separate congregation: and testimony has been publicly borne against him in years past, by some of the most noted ministers in the country. In Scotland, when this notion was above forty years ago advanced and propagated among them by some who have since separated themselves from that church, it was condemned by the General Assembly of the church of Scotland, as being contrary to the word of God, to their confession of faith and catechisms; and all their ministers were strictly prohibited under the pain of the censures of that church, by writing, printing, preaching, catechising, or in any other way, to teach this, and the other doctrines in connexion with it[a]. These things are not said to determine what is truth, by the names and influence of fallible men. To do so, would be to justify the whole popish party in their appeal to the pope, to decide all points of religion; and to give up the first maxim on which the reformation was built; viz. *that the word of God is the only rule of faith and manners.* It is not what the first reformers said, nor what the assembly of divines said, nor what any other men or body of men, since the apostles were dead, have said, or do say, that can determine any doctrine of religion, or settle any point of controversy about religion. If they cannot be settled by the holy Scriptures, they must remain for ever undetermined in this world. To be unwilling to appeal to the bible, and to that alone, to determine what is truth; is a full proof a man is at heart an infidel. He does not really believe that the bible is the word of God, nor does he build his scheme of religion upon it; but upon his own experiences,

a See the acts of the general assembly of the church of Scotland, 1720, Act v. and 1722, Act vii. particularly these words, out of a book entitled, the Marrow of Modern Divinity, were expressly condemned, viz. "wherefore as Paul and Silas said to the jailor, so say I unto you, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved; that is, be verily persuaded in your heart, that Jesus Christ is yours, and that you shall have life and salvation by him, that whatsoever Christ did for the salvation of mankind, he did it for you; forasmuch as the holy scripture speaketh to all in general, none of us ought to distrust himself, but believe that it doth belong particularly to himself." These words were expressly condemned, as making saving faith consist in, "a man's persuasion that Christ is his, died for him," &c.

or the sayings of others, whose experiences he imagines were like his own. However, what has been said, may let the public see how I can consistently entertain an opinion, that some men's hearts may be more orthodox than their heads in this matter; which was the point I was upon [b].

But while true converts may, from their first conversion, from a consciousness of the saving change they have passed through, be persuaded, that they are in a state of favour with God, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God; satan, that great enemy to all good, may transform himself into an angel of light, and delude hundreds and thousands, and ten thousands, (and it is foretold that satan is to deceive the nations, till the thousand years of Christ's reign do commence, Rev. xx. 3.) with a firm belief that their sins are forgiven, who never were converted; and so oblige them to believe their sins are forgiven, when, according to the plainest declarations of Scripture, they are not forgiven; and so necessitate them, in order to vindicate themselves, to assert that in justifying faith, "we believe that to be true which is not true before we believe it, and that without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason."

And these false converts, emboldened by the greatness of their number, may rise, sketch out a whole new scheme of religion, subversive of Christianity, and seek to propagate it through the Christian world, showing the greatest rancour against the true Gospel of Christ. Meanwhile, true Christians may get bewildered, and some perhaps brought unawares to espouse the language of the deluded, and to seem to plead their cause. And the common enemies to all experimental religion may rejoice, in hopes it will finally appear to all the world that there is nothing in vital piety, that all religion consists in an external regular behaviour; and that it is no matter what

b It is very observable, that Mr. Wilson, who is constantly repeating it, that all the protestant world are on his side, and glorying in it, is obliged, in the midst of it all to own, that while some hold that *assurance is of the essence of faith*, others only maintain, that *assurance accompanies it*: (p. 97.) two things in their nature essentially different, nay, contrary to each other. For to say, that *assurance accompanies faith*, is to say, "it is not faith, but something else which true believers are wont to have in company with faith."

men's principles be, if their lives are but good: which is nothing better than downright infidelity.

The way may now be prepared to state the question in dispute.

In the beginning of my third dialogue, which was on the nature of assurance of a title to eternal life, I had said, that "Sanctification, taking the word in a large and comprehensive sense, is the evidence, the only Scripture-evidence, of a good estate." And to prevent misunderstanding, I added, "It is usual for divines to distinguish between regeneration and conversion, between first conversion and progressive sanctification; between divine views and holy affections, between grace in the heart and an holy life and conversation; but I mean to comprehend all under one general name. You may call it the image of God, or holiness of heart and life, or a real conformity to the divine law, and a genuine compliance with the Gospel of Christ: I have already let you see what I apprehend to be the nature of law and Gospel, of love to God and faith in Christ. When I say, this is the only evidence, I mean that this is the only thing wherein saints and sinners, in every instance, differ. One has the image of God, the other has not. Or to express m yself in the language of inspiration, John xvii. 3. *This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* And 1 John ii 3, 4, 5. *Hereby we do know that we do know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby we know that we are in him.*"

In answer to which words, Mr. Cudworth says, this "is no other than the assurance of the Pharisee." *Further defence*, p. 265. But why? because says he, "it is only founded on the difference there is between him and other men."—To which I reply; this may as well be objected against the assurance of all the apostolical saints; as is evident from 1 John ii. 3, 4, 5. the very text I quoted. For they knew they loved God, and kept his commands, while the rest of the world lay in wickedness. And therefore they said, 1 John v. 19. *We*

know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And will Mr. Cudworth affirm that their assurance was that of the Pharisees? Besides, there is a fallacy in his words: for the apostolical assurance did not arise merely from a consciousness, that they differed from others, which might be true, and yet they have no grace, as was the case with the Pharisee; but from a consciousness that their characters were agreeable to the Gospel standard; that they had those graces which according to Christ's holy religion are peculiar to the saints, and certainly connected with eternal life. Upon this their assurance was built, just as I had represented. However, if Mr. Cudworth's words prove nothing else, yet at least they seem to be a sufficient evidence of his hearty disaffection to the only scriptural assurance of a good estate. And he appears to think with his late friend, that we may as well "place the dome of a cathedral on the stalk of a tulip," as place our assurance on this only scriptural foundation. But how then would he have us get assurance? even by believing that our sins are forgiven, while conscious that we are upon a level with the worst of sinners; no difference between us and them as dead in sin, as impenitent and unconverted, and as full of enmity to God. And this belief is to beget our first love. But, alas! what grounds have we for this belief? What evidence for the truth of what we believe? why none at all, says Mr. Marshal, "from Scripture, sense, or reason." For the fact believed to be true, "is not true before we believe it."

And as Mr. Cudworth affirms assurance from a consciousness of sanctification, to be the assurance of the Pharisee; so his brother, Mr. Wilson, with the same spirit, affirms it to be the assurance of Papists, perhaps an hundred times over[c]; although he well knew, that the Papists join with Antinomians, in denying that a certain assurance from a consciousness of our own sanctification, is attainable, in the present life[d];

c See Mr. Wilson's Review of Palæmon's creed. Vol. 2. p. 101, and elsewhere through both his volumes. N. B. The particular references to Mr. Wilson, which will be made in these sheets, will be to his 2d Vol. in which he has made some remarks on my dialogues. I here give notice of it once for all.

d Page 104, Mr. Wilson says, speaking of the Papists, "as it is supposed, that men will frequently have too much reason to suspect the sincerity of their own love and obedience; whether the former be genuine, and the latter such as God

how then would Mr. Wilson have us get assurance? even by believing our sins are forgiven, without any consciousness of any grace in us, "without any reflection upon the act of appropriation made by the believer, or a persuasion of the truth of his own faith." p. 123. "Without knowing any thing further about *their state*, than that they are by nature *children of wrath, and heirs of hell*, under the curse of an angry sin-revenging God." p. 175. These are his own words.

But how shall we know that our sins are forgiven? Are our sins forgiven while we are in an impenitent, unconverted, Christless state? are they forgiven even while we are "heirs of hell, and under the curse of an angry God?" that is, forgiven when they are not forgiven! an express contradiction! or are we to believe they are forgiven, when in fact they are not forgiven? Yes, this is the very thing Antinomians formerly held, that the elect are justified from eternity, or from the resurrection of Christ, and that in due time their justifi-

will accept of; they granted, that any hope of salvation men can attain to in this mortal state, must, and ought, still to be *mixed with fear and doubting*. *They never can attain to any absolute certainty about it.* Such were the leading sentiments of the most eminent teachers in the Romish Church."

And how exactly agreeable these sentiments are to the sentiments of the most eminent teachers of Mr. Wilson's party, the following words of the celebrated Mr. H—y, will show: 'This method of seeking peace and assurance, I fear, will perplex the simple-minded; and cherish rather than suppress the fluctuations of doubt. For, let the signs be what you please, a love of the brethren, or a love of all righteousness, a change of heart, or an alteration of life; these good qualifications are sometimes like the stars at noon-day, not easily, if at all, discernible: or else they are like a glow-worm in the night, glimmering, rather than shining: consequently will yield, at the best, but a feeble, at the worst, a very precarious evidence: If, in such a manner, we should acquire some little assurance, how soon may it be unsettled by the incursions of daily temptations, or destroyed by the insurrection of remaining sin! at such a juncture, how will it keep its standing! how retain its being! it will fare like a tottering wall before a tempest, or be as the rush without mire, and the flag without water.

But while Papists and Antinomians thus join to deny any certain assurance by our own inherent graces, *the Assembly of Divines at Westminster*, agreeable with the holy Scriptures, strongly assert it. Conf. of Faith, chap. xviii. "Such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus, and love him in sincerity, &c. may in this life be certainly assured, that they are in a state of grace."—"This certainty is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion, but an infallible assurance of faith, founded upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation, the inward evidence of those graces unto which these promises are made," &c.

cation is manifested to them by the spirit, on which they commence believers. And this scheme, how contrary soever to the BIBLE, was consistent with itself. But that scheme is new modelled. And now they say that in justifying faith, "we believe that to be true, which is not true before we believe it." This Mr. Marshal had said. And this saying of Mr. Marshal's, Mr. Wilson undertakes to vindicate, (p. 14.) pretending full assurance that the whole bible and all the Protestant world are on his side.

Mr. Cudworth was affrighted and shocked at the thought of "believing that to be true which is not true before we believe it, without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason," after I had shown the absurdity of it in the *twelve Queries* in my *second Dialogue*. He felt he could not answer my reasoning. He was afraid. He durst not look the point fairly in the face. He turned his eyes and buried himself in obscurity in the midst of a multitude of ambiguous words. And to pacify his credulous reader, says, that I misrepresent their scheme; when he at the same time, knew that I had represented it exactly as Mr. Marshal, a writer highly celebrated by all their party, had done. See his further defence, p. 246.

But Mr. Wilson is a man of courage; he thinks he can maintain the point: he sees it must be done, or their whole scheme be given up. He has tried: he has doubtless done his best. And this is the very point now to be examined, viz. Whether in justifying faith "we believe that to be true which is not true before we believe it?"

A position in itself so evidently absurd, that were it not made use of to deceive multitudes of precious souls, it would not deserve the least attention of any man of sense. But matters being as they are, it is worth while to examine it. This position evidently lies at the foundation of their whole scheme. And if this single position is false, their whole scheme is false. For they all affirm that our sins are not forgiven before we believe they are forgiven. And that in the first direct act of justifying faith we believe they are forgiven. And therefore it is, and must be, a fundamental maxim with them, upon the truth of which their whole

scheme depends, that in justifying faith, *we believe that to be true, which is not true before we believe it.*

No writer I ever saw, has expressed the matter with such undisguised honesty and simplicity, as their celebrated Mr. Marshall, whose Gospel Mystery of Sanctification, they profess to value next to the bible. Let us therefore hear his own words; look into their plain and natural meaning, and state distinctly the point to be disputed.

Mr. Marshall's words are these, and the more we think of them, the more remarkable will they appear. "Let it be well observed, that the reason why we are to assure ourselves in our faith that God freely giveth Christ and his salvation to us in particular, is not because it is a truth before we believe it, but because it becometh a certain truth when we believe it; and because it never will be true, except we do in some measure persuade and assure ourselves that it is so. We have no absolute promise or declaration in Scripture, that God certainly will or doth give Christ and his salvation to any one of us in particular; neither do we know it to be true already by Scripture, or sense, or reason, before we assure ourselves absolutely of it; yea, we are without Christ's salvation at present, in a state of sin and misery, under the curse and wrath of God. Only, we are bound by the command of God thus to assure ourselves: and the Scripture doth sufficiently warrant us that we shall not deceive ourselves, in believing a lie: but *according to our faith, so shall it be to us.* Matt. ix. 29. This is a strange kind of assurance, far different from other ordinary kinds; and therefore no wonder if it be found weak and imperfect, and difficult to be obtained, and assaulted with many doubtings. We are constrained to believe other things on the clear evidence we have that they are true, and would remain true, whether we believe them or no: so that we cannot deny our assent, without rebelling against the light of our senses, reason, or conscience. But here our assurance is not impressed on our thoughts by any evidence of the thing; but we must work it out in ourselves by the assistance of the spirit of God." Mystery, p. 173, 174[e]. In this plain, honest declaration, which opens to

e New-York edition, page 157.

clear view the heart and soul of their whole scheme, these eight things may be observed.

1. In general: that "this is a STRANGE kind of assurance, FAR DIFFERENT from other ordinary kinds." In all other kinds of assurance, he observes, there are these two things. 1. What we believe "is true before we believe it, and whether we believe it or no." 2. "We are constrained to believe, on the clear evidence we have that they are true." But "this is a strange kind of assurance, far different from other ordinary kinds," in these two respects: 1. As we believe "that to be true, which is not true before we believe it; and never would be true, if we did not believe it." 2. As we believe "without any evidence of the thing."—"Any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason." Herein the strangeness consists, and its difference from all other kinds of assurance in the universe.

A true convert gets assurance thus: the word of God teaches, John i. 12, That he who receives Christ and believes in his name, is a child of God; but I receive Christ and believe in his name, therefore I am a child of God. Again, the word of God teaches, Acts iii. 19. that he who repents and is converted, shall have his sins blotted out; but I repent and am converted; therefore my sins are blotted out. Once more, the word of God teaches, Acts xvi. 31. that he who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved; but I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; therefore I shall be saved. This is the "ordinary" way of getting assurance. And the things believed are true before we believe them: and we believe only in exact proportion to our evidence.

But in "this strange kind of assurance," a sinner who as yet is impenitent, unconverted, has not received Christ, not believed in his name, but is "under the wrath and curse of God," believes his sins are forgiven; not because they are, for they are not; not because he has evidence they are, for he has none; but full evidence to the contrary: but, say they, because God has commanded him to believe that they are forgiven, and promised that if he believes they are forgiven, they shall be forgiven. That is, God has commanded him to believe what is not true, and promised that if he believes

that which is not true, it shall become a truth. "According to our faith so shall it be to us." Not that that text in Mat. ix. 29. speaks a word about "this strange kind of assurance:" for it does not. The thing the two blind men believed was true before they believed it: and they were constrained to believe by clear evidence; viz. That Christ was able to open their eyes. See ver. 27, 28. No. This kind of assurance is so strange, that it is not so much as once required, commanded, exhorted to, or recommended in the bible; nor any thing like it. Nor indeed is there any thing like it in the universe. For it is in truth "a strange kind of assurance, far different from other ordinary kinds." But to be more particular; and that even those who are of the weakest capacity may not only think, but be quite certain, that we do not misunderstand this author, so very highly celebrated by gentlemen of the first rank on that side of the question, observe,

2. The thing to be believed is a supposed fact, which has no existence, viz. "that God freely giveth Christ and his salvation to us in particular." Which he says, "is not true before we believe it." But pray, what does he mean by God's giving Christ and his salvation to us in particular?" We often read in the bible of the gift of Christ, but every thing taught in the bible relating to that grand and glorious affair, is true before we believe, and whether we believe or no. For instance; is it not true, whether we believe it or not, that *God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life?* John iii. 16. And are not those words true, whether we believe them or not, that *God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son?* 1 John v. 11. And again, were not those words true, whether the Jews believed them or not, *my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven?* John vi. 32. Yes; beyond all doubt all these things are true, and every single sentiment implied in them is true, has been true above these thousand years, and will remain true, whether we believe them or not. And indeed this is the case with all the truths contained in the bible; yea, with every single truth in the universe. They are true before we believe them, and whether we believe them or not.

What then does Mr. Marshall mean, by God's "giving Christ and his salvation to us in particular?" Which, he says, "is not true before we believe it." Not that giving of Christ we read of in the bible; but something essentially different. He plainly means *giving us in particular a saving interest in Christ and his salvation:* granting us pardon, justification, and a title to eternal life, while impenitent and unconverted. This is plain from what he considers as opposite thereto. "Yea, we are without Christ's salvation at present, in a state of sin and misery, under the wrath and curse of God." Which words determine his meaning with the utmost certainty. So that the fact to be believed to be true, is this, that we have a saving interest in Christ, are delivered from "the wrath and curse of God," are pardoned and entitled to eternal life: and indeed this is no more than Mr. Wilson, and all others in his scheme, hold that we do believe, in the first direct act of justifying faith; and without which they all affirm our faith is not saving. Mr. Wilson affirms this over and over again, perhaps an hundred times, through both his volumes. Particularly, p. 145, he defines justifying faith in these words: "Justifying faith is a believing the remission of sins with special application to a man's self.——Now observe,

3. Mr. Marshall says, "this is not true before we believe it." But had it been declared, expressly or implicitly, in the word of God, it had been true before we believe it, and whether we believe it or no: for this is the case with every declaration in the bible. But Mr. Marshall is so open, frank, and honest, as to own that it is not taught in the word of God. "We have no absolute promise or declaration in Scripture, that God doth or will give Christ and his salvation to any one of us in particular. Yea, we are without Christ's salvation at present, under the wrath of God."——Therefore,

4. The thing to be believed to be true, instead of being true before we believe it, is false. Yea, is known to be false, is owned to be false, is publicly declared before the world to be false. Instead of our having a saving interest in Christ, we "are under the wrath and curse of God." And therefore this honest man, in perfect consistence with himself, declares,

5. Neither do we know it to be true already by Scripture, or sense, or reason:" our assurance is not "impressed on our thoughts by ANY evidence of the thing". And indeed, nothing could be more absurd and self-contradictory, than to pretend, (as some of the party seem to do,) to have any evidence of the truth of a fact, which is known and acknowledged not to be true. For if we not only think, but know that it is not true, we know that there is evidence of its untruth. Not simply no evidence of its truth; but full demonstration of its falsehood [f]. But how a man, not given up to delusion, can believe that to be true, which he certainly knows is false, may puzzle a Locke or Newton to say. However, Mr. Marshall goes on to declare,

6. That herein lies the great difficulty of believing, not as it is with divine truths, because the thing to be believed is contrary to our vicious biasses; (*John* iii. 19.) but merely because we have no evidence of its truth, but full demonstration that it is false. "This is a strange kind of assurance, far different from other ordinary kinds; and therefore no wonder if it be found weak and imperfect, and difficult to be obtained, and assaulted with many doubtings." But pray, wherein does it differ from all other kinds of assurance? and why is it so difficult to be obtained? He goes on to say,

f Mr. Marshall's meaning is so plain, that it seems impossible it should be any plainer. And these words did not drop from his pen inadvertently; but the plain truth of the case drew them from him. For he has said nothing but what is absolutely essential to their scheme. He knew it was so; and he had honesty enough to own it. True, Mr. Cudworth was sensible he could not vindicate the scheme, set in this open honest light: therefore he, (absolutely without any grounds,) pretends I misrepresent their scheme; and then buries up himself in a heap of ambiguous words; without attempting to answer my queries upon the point. But I appeal to all men of common sense, into whose hands this shall come, whether I do not understand Mr. Marshall's words in the sense, the very sense, the only sense they can possibly bear. It is plain beyond dispute, that Mr. Wilson understands them in the very sense I do. For, as we shall see presently, he maintains that in justifying faith, "we believe that to be true which is not true before we believe it." Well! if it is not true, it is false. And if it is not true, it implies a contradiction to say, that there is "any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason," of its truth. And therefore if it be believed at all, it must be, "without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason," as Mr. Marshall honestly owns.

"we are constrained to believe other things on the clear evidence that we have, that they are true, and would remain true, whether we believe them or no; so that we cannot deny our assent without rebellion against the light of our senses, reason, or conscience: but here our assurance is not impressed on our thoughts BY ANY EVIDENCE OF THE THING." And on this account, and merely on this account, is it difficult to believe this fact. For there is no man but that would be glad to believe, that instead of going to hell after death, he shall be for ever happy in heaven. Balaam said, *let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like his.* So that wicked men would be glad to get this faith; and if they cannot get it, it is not because they are not willing to have it, as was the case with the wicked Jews, whom Christ upbraided, John v. 40. *YE WILL NOT come to me that ye might have life;* but merely because they have not "any evidence of the thing." So then they are not to blame for their unbelief; for it is no crime. Rather they are to be pitied; for it can be considered only as a calamity. And accordingly, several writers have of late appeared in Great-Britain, zealous to prove, that faith is no duty, and unbelief no sin.

Thus far then Mr. Marshall's words are plain, and we cannot mistake his meaning: but the next particular is not without some difficulty. For,

7. He says, that the fact not being true, but rather known to be false, and so there being no evidence of any kind, or from any quarter to build our faith upon, we must therefore "work it out in ourselves by the assistance of the spirit of God." But how can a man in his right senses, go about to work up himself to believe that to be true which he knows is not true, but absolutely false? and which way does a man go to work in this case? He does not look for evidence; for he knows there is none from Scripture, sense, or reason. Nay, he does not try to believe it to be true, as supposing it true; for he knows it is not true. But he tries to believe it is true, that it may become true by his believing it to be true. Surprising, shocking affair!

And all this "by the assistance of the spirit of God." But pray, how can the spirit of God grant any assistance in such

a case? Were the fact true, and were there evidence of its truth, we should need no assistance in the case. A wicked man is as able, and as willing to believe such a fact, as any saint in the world. And since the fact is known not to be true, and it is known there is no evidence of its truth, but full demonstration of its falsehood, what assistance can the spirit of God grant in the case? The Psalmist prays, *open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.* And if our vicious biasses render us inattentive to, and prejudice us against, divine truths, so that we are slow of heart to believe them to be, what in fact they are, whether we believe or no; or if we *hate the light because our deeds are evil,* if we hate the truth because it condemns us, we may need the influences of the divine spirit to remove our prejudices, to open our eyes, to make us attentive to, and give us a relish for the truth, to cause us to *savour the things which be of God;* and so long as any corruption remains in our hearts, to blind our minds to the holy beauty and glory of divine truths, we may need the divine spirit to *open our eyes, that we may behold wondrous things out of God's law.* But in this case, there is no prejudice in the heart of the most wicked man in the world to be removed; for the fact believed would have suited Balaam himself. And it can be of no advantage to have our eyes opened in the case; but rather a disadvantage. For the wider our eyes are opened, the more plainly and clearly shall we see, that it is not true, but absolutely false; that there is no evidence of its truth, but full demonstration of its falsehood. There is nothing in the case, therefore, to be done by any spirit for us, but to put out our eyes, and blind our minds, that so we may, by the mighty power of delusion, be led firmly to believe a lie. But surely, no spirit will do this for us, but that wicked spirit who is the father of lies, and a murderer from the beginning. He may bring texts of Scripture to us, as once he did to our Saviour, and apply them to our souls, one after another, till ravished with joy, we cry out, "I know my sins are forgiven! I know God loves me! I know I shall be saved! I am as certain of it, as of my own existence! and should all the world say I am deluded, I would not regard them!" I have been par-

ticularly acquainted with many instances of sinners thus deluded. Numbers of our converts in New-England twenty years ago, were to all appearance converted thus.

Thus we have taken an impartial view of Mr. Marshall's doctrine, the very doctrine Mr. Wilson has undertaken to vindicate; and for a complete stating the question to be disputed, there is but one observation more to be made.

8. A fundamental maxim in Mr. Marshall's scheme, on which all the rest depends; I say, a fundamental maxim in Mr. Marshall's whole scheme is, that in justifying faith "we believe that to be true which is not true before we believe it." And this maxim is absolutely essential to his scheme. For,

The fact believed is, that "my sins are forgiven," or in other words, "that I have a saving interest in Christ and all the benefits purchased by him." Now if they say that this is true before I believe it, they must, with the grossest sort of Antinomians, hold that we are justified before faith, in express contradiction to the whole Gospel. This they do not, they dare not say. They are therefore under an absolute necessity to say, "that we believe that to be true which is not true before we believe it."

But if it is not true before we believe it, then every thing Mr. Marshall has said will inevitably follow. For if it is not true, it is false. If it is not true, there is, there can be, no "evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason," that it is true; and therefore we must believe "without any evidence of the thing." And so it is "a strange kind of assurance," and "difficult to be obtained," and we must "work it out in ourselves." And it being so contrary to common sense, even to the reason of all mankind, to believe that to be true which we know is not true, we evidently need the assistance of some spirit in the affair. Not the spirit of God indeed, for he never helps men to believe any thing but what is true before we believe it.

If therefore it can be proved, that this fundamental maxim is false, down goes their whole scheme, and all who are settled upon it lie buried in its ruins.

1. It is self-evident, that in all instances, a thing must exist, at least in order of nature, before its existence can be

discerned by the human mind. To say otherwise, is an express contradiction. For to discern that a thing exists before it does exist, is to see that it is before it is: which is the same as to say that a thing may be, and not be, at the same time. Which is an express contradiction.

But to believe my sins are forgiven, is to discern that this fact is really so, that this thing does exist. Its existence then is in order of nature, before I discern its existence. For to say I can see a thing to be, which is not, is an express contradiction. So then they must say, we are justified before faith, or their faith is an inconsistent, self-contradictory thing.

I am well aware that this sort of converts, in their inward experiences, are wont to have the love of God and pardon of sin, to their apprehension, manifested to their souls before they believe. For this manifestation is the ground of their belief: and indeed it would be simply impossible they ever should believe, if they had not something of this nature. For no human mind can believe what appears to be not true. But it will not do to speak out this secret, and tell the world plainly how it is. For then it would appear that they are justified before faith, and all would join to condemn them as gross Antinomians. And therefore they are obliged to give such an account of their faith, as in its own nature evidently implies a contradiction. Nor can you get one of these men coolly and impartially to attend to this point, because they are conscious of an insuperable difficulty. Rather, they will bury themselves in obscurity, in a multitude of ambiguous words, not at all to the purpose. Witness Mr. Cudworth's Further Defence, and Mr. Wilson's Review.

2. The thing believed to be true, is on their own scheme not true.——For,

They all hold that we are not pardoned until after faith, at least in order of nature. To be sure, Mr. Wilson expresses this strongly. He says, p. 209, that "justification is a consequent of our union with Christ by faith." And to the same purpose, p. 194, 195. 205, &c. Now, if it be a consequent of our union with Christ by faith, then it does not exist till after faith. Faith is in order of nature before justification. But their faith consists in believing they are justified. And

so it consists in the believing of a lie: unless they will contradict themselves, and say that justification is not *a consequent of our union with Christ by faith.* Or else affirm, that to believe a thing is when it is not, is not to believe a lie.——Besides,

The proposition believed to be true in their faith, is what they themselves must own to be a lie, on another account. For in their faith, the proposition believed to be true is, *that an unbeliever is justified.* For their faith does not consist in believing this proposition, viz. *I, who am a believer, am justified.* For this is true before it is believed, and whether it is believed or not. But their faith consists in believing this proposition, viz. *I, who am an unbeliever, am justified,* which, as they say, is not true before it is believed, and for the truth of which we have no evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason. For they all maintain, that in the first act of justifying faith, prior to any reflection on my own act, I believe my sins are all forgiven, p. 102. 123. "without knowing any thing further about my state, than that I am by nature a child of wrath, and an heir of hell, under the curse of an angry and sin-revenging God." p. 175. But if I believe, that *I, who,* to my own apprehension, *am an unbeliever, am justified;* then I believe, that *an unbeliever is justified;* which they own not to be true. Indeed, they hold that in my believing it to be true, it becomes true. And so, though it was an untruth, yet now it becomes true. And so they keep themselves from seeing that which they believe continues to be a lie. However, it was a lie when first believed, according to their own scheme: for it becomes true, only in consequence of their believing it to be true.—And if God has never said, as in fact he has not, that *if we believe our sins are forgiven, they shall be forgiven;* what they believe is not only a lie, when they believe it, but also continues to be a lie, notwithstanding their faith; and will be found to be so at the day of judgment, according to the express declaration of our blessed Saviour. Mat. vii. 21—27.

But again, what they believe may be proved to be a lie by another argument. Thus, according to Scripture, no impenitent sinner, while such, ever was, or ever will be forgiven.

But they believe themselves forgiven while impenitent: therefore what they believe is a lie. That no impenitent sinner, while such, ever was, or ever will be forgiven, is plain from Lev. xxvi. throughout. 1 Kings viii. throughout. Prov. xxviii. 13. Isai. lv. 7. Luke xiii. 5. Acts ii. 38. & iii. 19. &c. &c. as I have proved at large in another place. (*Essay on the Nature of the Gospel.* Sect. viii.) Nor can these men deny it, without expressly contradicting the *Westminster confession of faith,* which asserts, Chap. xv. That *no sinner may expect pardon without repentance.* And if they give up that *confession of faith,* as heterodox, what will become of their bold pretences, and confident affirmation, that "*all the protestant world* are on their side, except Arminians, Baxterians, and ranting Sectaries?" p. 95. But they believe themselves forgiven while impenitent. As is certain from this, that they all hold that a belief they are forgiven is the very thing which causes them to begin to repent. Therefore, their faith consists in believing a lie.—But,

3. Granting the fact believed to be indeed true, yet as it is acknowledged to be no truth revealed in the Gospel, their faith is not an evangelical faith, nor are those religious affections which flow from it, evangelical graces. For as the fact believed is not revealed in the Gospel, so it is no part of Gospel truth. And so their faith is not Gospel faith, nor their holiness Gospel holiness. For all evangelical and holy affections are excited in the mind by Gospel truths. Psalm xix. 7. John xvii. 17. Jam. i. 18. They may be called Antinomians; and they greatly resemble the ancient Manicheans; as I have shown in the forementioned essay: but they cannot with propriety, be called Christians; for that which is the foundation of their scheme, is *no part of Christianity,* is not once taught in Christ's Gospel; as they themselves acknowledge. For the whole Gospel, they own, is true before we believe it, and whether we believe it or not. But the first and fundamental article of their creed, and that from which all their religious affections flow, is not true before they believe it to be true; and so it is no part of the Gospel.

4. In order to prove Mr. Sandeman's faith not to be justifying faith, Mr. Wilson uses this argument: "Every one

who is possessed of justifying faith, must undoubtedly be justified; but a general belief of the Gospel, or a general assent to the truth of the facts recorded in the New Testament, is to be found with many who were never justified: therefore a general faith, or assent to the truths of the Gospel, and history of the facts recorded in the New Testament, is not justifying faith." p. 72. This argument he asserts to be conclusive. But it is equally strong against himself. For every one who is possessed of justifying faith, must be undoubtedly justified; but a *belief of the remission of sins, with application to a man's self*, which is his own definition of justifying faith, p. 145, is to be found with many who were never justified; as he himself owns, p. 102. Therefore this belief is not justifying faith."

Should he say, that self-deceived sinners do not believe their sins to be forgiven, upon the testimony of God in his word; the same is true on his scheme, by his own acknowledgment, for it was not true before he believed it. But the testimony of God is true before we believe it, and whether we ever believe it or not: as he himself owns. Therefore his faith is not built on the divine testimony; but rather, as Mr. Marshall says, "is without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason."

Or should he say, that the faith of deluded sinners is not productive of evangelical graces, the same may be said of his faith. For no religious affections can be called evangelical graces, which do not result from the knowledge and belief of some truth, revealed in the Gospel. But the supposed truth which is the source of all their religious affections, is not contained in the Gospel, as they themselves own.

Or should he say, that deceived sinners are prompted to believe their sins forgiven, from a self-righteous spirit: just this is the case on the scheme of these men. As I have proved at large, Essay, Sect. IX. There is no possible way then for him to get rid of the force of his own argument. It is equally conclusive against his scheme, and Mr. Sandeman's; and does indeed confute them both at once.

Thus we see, that the faith of these gentlemen, in which

they profess to believe that to be true which is not true before we believe it, implies a contradiction in its own nature; is the belief of a lie; is no Gospel faith; is nothing more than deluded sinners may have: it is therefore very far from being that precious faith which is peculiar to God's elect, and which is infallibly connected with eternal life. Nothing therefore now remains, but to attend carefully to Mr. Wilson's arguments in its vindication, which may be summed up in these four.

Mr. Wilson's arguments to prove, that in justifying faith, we believe that to be true which is not true before we believe it.

Arg. 1. From the offers and promises of the Gospel. His notion is, that the declaration of the Gospel amounts to this: O, impenitent, unconverted, Christless sinner, *believe and thou shalt be saved*; i. e. believe thy sins are forgiven, and they shall be forgiven. Believe thou shalt be saved, and it shall be to thee according to thy faith. It is not true before we believe; but in believing it to be true, it becomes true. *According to thy faith so shall it be to thee*, p. 14. But this declaration is not made in the Gospel: but is a lie; and he that believes it, believes a lie; as has been already proved.

Mr. Wilson has laboured the point, in vindication of Mr. Marshall's words, p. 28, 29, 30, 31; and this is the sum and substance of his plea: "an offered gift is not mine before I receive it."—"But the offer gives me a right to receive it." "To believe it mine is to receive it." Therefore, in justifying faith, we believe that to be true which is not true before we believe it; a mere fallacy. To believe a thing mine, is different from, and a consequence of, receiving it.—For instance, a man offers me a guinea; the guinea suits my heart, I receive it, I know I receive it, and so I know and believe it is mine. But here is nothing like believing a thing to be true, which is not true before I believe it.

The Pharisees firmly believed, that the God of Abraham was their God, and father, and friend, and would make them happy for ever. This none can deny. But did they receive the God of Abraham for their God and portion, as he was

offered to them in the Old Testament? No, far from it. They hated and rejected him with all their hearts, and murdered his very image, his only begotten Son. Just so a deluded sinner may be ravished in a belief that Christ, pardon, and heaven, are his own; and yet in the mean time may hate and reject with the utmost abhorrence, that Christ, that pardon, and that heaven, which are offered in the Gospel; as I have shown at large in the forementioned Essay.

"We agree, that the Gospel proposes nothing to be believed by us," says Mr. Wilson, "but what is infallibly true, whether we believe it or not. But if any one should from hence infer, that the Gospel does not afford sufficient warrant, or lay a foundation for believing any thing but what is infallibly true whether we believe it or not; this we beg leave to deny. For as God in the Gospel freely promises, or makes an offer of life and salvation to sinners through Jesus Christ, it is evident, the promise cannot be believed but in the way of appropriating the gift, or believing they shall be saved through his blood: which certainly cannot be said to be a truth, whether we believe it or not; for if it was, all who hear the Gospel would infallibly be saved.

"The matter is plainly this: the Gospel no where proposes it as a truth to be believed, that men shall be saved through Christ, whether they believe or not; but it every where testifies, that *he that believeth shall be saved.* Now this very declaration, published, and frequently repeated in the Gospel for the encouragement of sinners, makes it warrantable, for every one of them to believe his own particular salvation through Christ. And the truth is, till he believes this upon the footing of the divine promise, faithfulness, or veracity, he in effect, really, and in the sense of Scripture, disbelieves and calls in question the truth of the divine testimony made known in the proposition aforementioned. That he does so, evidently appears by his not crediting it, so as to rest his hope of salvation wholly upon the promise of God, and the record which he has given of his Son, in the Gospel." p. 14, 15.

Stop now, candid reader, and critically examine these words: "He disbelieves the divine testimony," says he. But why? because "he does not rest his hope of salvation whol-

ly upon the promise of God." But pray, what promise? Why this, "he that believeth shall be saved." Which is so "frequently repeated in the Gospel." He that believeth! that believeth what! pray, what is the sinner to believe? he is to believe "his own particular salvation;" to "believe that he shall be saved." But is this the meaning of the text? Indeed no. That proposition is not once used in this sense in the bible. The Gospel no where declares, that *he that believeth he shall be saved, shall be saved*: but very many times expressly to the contrary. The thing believed is a lie. But to believe a lie, is not to believe in Christ; unless they make this lie, that very Christ on which they venture their all for eternity. Read the bible through, O impenitent, unconverted, Christless sinner, and you may find enough such declarations as these: *repent and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus for the remission of sins; repent and be converted that thy sins may be blotted out; except ye repent ye shall perish; repent, and believe the Gospel; believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shall be saved;* and these declarations are all true before you believe them, and whether you believe them or not. But you can no where find any thing like this, *believe thy sins are forgiven, and they shall be forgiven; believe thou shalt be saved, and thou shalt be saved.* In this case, what you believe is not true before you believe it, as they themselves grant. And believing a lie, though it may make it seem true to you, yet it will not make it in fact true.

Pray, who is he that believes the divine testimony? He that believes the very thing God means to say; or he that puts a new meaning to God's words, which God never intended, and which never came into his heart? May we not say of these men, as our Saviour did of the Pharisees; *by your traditions you make the command of God of none effect?* So by their faith they make *the declarations of the Gospel a lie.* The Gospel declares, *except ye repent, ye shall all perish: repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.* But these men teach, that if an impenitent unconverted sinner, while such, believes his sins are blotted out, they are blotted out. That is, if he believes a thing to be true, which is directly contrary to the declaration of the Gospel, it shall be-

come true. And so his faith shall cause *the declaration of the Gospel to become a lie.*

Besides, O Christless sinner, what warrant have you to believe that your sins are forgiven? Is it already true? No. But does "the Gospel propose any thing to be believed by us, but what is infallibly true, whether we believe it or not?" Mr. Wilson himself is obliged to say, No. But then says, "the Gospel warrants you to believe, what it does not propose to you to be believed." But is not this an express contradiction? No, says Mr. Wilson. For "the promise of the Gospel cannot be believed, but in believing that they shall be saved through his blood." As if he had said, the promise cannot be believed, but in believing what the promise does not say.—For the promise does not say that you in particular shall be saved; or that you shall be saved, if you believe you shall be saved. So that here is another self-contradiction; viz. A promise cannot be believed, but in believing what is not contained in the promise.

But, says Mr. Wilson, "if a man offers me a gift freely, I have certainly a warrant to receive it, and in receiving it, to believe it mine." p. 18. That is, conscious to myself that I do receive it, I have good evidence to believe it is mine. And in this case, it is mine, in order of nature, before I believe it mine. And so what I believe, is true before I believe it. And so this similitude is nothing to the purpose, nor does it at all help to reconcile to common sense, their "strange kind of assurance, which is far different from other ordinary kinds." For they believe Christ is theirs without any consciousness that they receive him. p. 123. And constantly affirm, that that assurance of an interest in Christ, which results merely from a consciousness of any inherent grace, is altogether popish.

But no man can believe the Gospel, who does not believe his sins are pardoned, in Mr. Wilson's judgment. p. 14. 133, &c. &c. And yet he knows, and he owns, that this fact is not revealed in the Gospel. Yea, he says, "it is not proposed in the Gospel to be believed by us." p. 14. And yet no man, he says, can believe the Gospel, who does not believe it. An express contradiction again. Mr. Wilson grants a man may have saving faith, and yet not know that it is saving. p. 123.

Marg. But he would have a sinner believe his sins are pardoned, previous to one single thought that he has saving faith. p. 123. But in this case it must be "without any evidence of the thing." However, he disbelieves the Gospel if he does not believe it, although there is no such thing in the Gospel. "A strange kind of assurance!"

But, says Mr. Wilson, "the stung Israelites, inlooking to the brazen serpent, had every one of them good reason to believe, and fully assure himself, that he in particular should be healed." And why? plainly because every Israelite, while conscious to himself that he is looking, must be certain of a cure. And just thus any sinner, who is conscious to himself that he looks to Christ as he is invited to do,, may be as certain of a cure. But in Mr. Wilson's "strange kind of assurance," we must be certain of a cure without any such consciousness. p. 123. It is popish, he constantly cries, to get assurance from this consciousness. But had a stung Israelite looked to the brazen serpent, without being at the same time conscious to himself that he did look, he could not have been assured of a cure, notwithstanding his belief of the divine declaration, that *whosoever looks shall be healed.*

But Mr. Wilson will again say, "had not the Israelites a good warrant to take and eat the manna which lay around their tents? and has not every sinner as good a right to take Christ, the bread of life, and eat and live for ever?" p. 31. Had the Israelites loathed the manna so perfectly, as absolutely to refuse to gather and eat it; and in their hunger, set themselves to work up a belief that their bellies were full, without any consciousness of the thing, it might have been to Mr. Wilson's purpose. But what was there in all their conduct, at all resembling Mr. Wilson's faith? They gathered the manna, they made cakes of it, they eat, they were refreshed, and they were conscious to themselves of all that passed. Here was no assurance worked up "without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason." Here was no believing any thing to be true, but what was true before it was believed. Here was nothing but what was perfectly rational. In short, here was nothing like these men's notion of faith, not the least shadow of a resemblance. Nor indeed

there is in all nature any thing to resemble their faith, unless among those who are delirious, who very often believe strongly things to be true which would have no truth in them if they did not believe them. But then even the most delirious man alive, never attempted to act so distractedly as to try to believe that to be true, which he knew as yet was not true. This is peculiar to these men, and there is nothing like it in the universe. For, as honest Mr. Marshall says, "this is a strange kind of assurance, far different from other ordinary kinds." To hunt about therefore for similitudes to represent it, is quite out of character. But the men are shocked to see their scheme stark naked; and therefore these similitudes, like fig-leaves, are gathered to hide its nakedness; but all in vain.

Thus we have a specimen of Mr. Wilson's manner of reasoning, to vindicate our believing that to be true which is not true, from the declarations, offers, and promises of the Gospel. He repeats much the same things perhaps 200 times over in his two volumes. And when all is said and done, it comes to this:—"God has, in fact, no where in his word declared that my sins are forgiven; however, I must believe they are forgiven, or I do not believe the word of God. It is not true before I believe it, but absolutely false; yet I have a good warrant to believe it is true, although I have no evidence of the thing from Scripture, sense, or reason. In receiving a gift, I know it is mine; but if this knowledge arises from a consciousness that I receive it, I am a papist." So absurd, so self-contradictory is his whole course of reasoning. And yet he pretends to have all the bible, and all the protestant world on his side. And no man can be saved, who is destitute of this unscriptural, irrational, inconsistent, self-contradictory thing, which he calls by the sacred name of faith in Christ. But let us proceed to another argument, which, like the former, is repeated over and over again, and scattered along through his whole performance.

Arg. 2. From the *nature of reliance* on Christ's righteousness. Perhaps this argument is stated and urged no where to so good advantage, as in p. 15, 16, 17. It will not be denied, that the Gospel declares Christ to be an all-sufficient

Saviour, and bears testimony to his righteousness as every way sufficient for the justification of the most guilty sinner. If one approaching to a frozen lake or river, over which he has occasion to pass, tells me that he has been assured by good information, that the ice was sufficiently strong to support him; and yet, after all proves timorous and adverse to make trial by venturing his person freely upon it: I plainly perceive he has no faith in the report he heard; because he does not trust in it; or, which is the same thing, he cannot trust, rely, confide in, or venture himself on the ice.—None can be said to believe the report of the Gospel concerning the righteousness of Christ, but those who, without being conscious of any personal merit or good qualification about themselves, rely firmly and wholly upon that righteousness for justification and salvation. And it is equally certain, that such a firm reliance, or fiducial recumbancy upon the righteousness of Christ revealed in the Gospel, must in the very nature of the thing, imply the faith of one's own justification and salvation through this righteousness. For a man to venture himself, and all his most valuable interests, upon a bottom that he doubts is weak and insufficient to support him, would be the greatest folly imaginable; yet this he must do, who pretends to rely wholly upon Christ and his righteousness for justification and salvation, and yet hath not the faith of his own salvation.—If a man has been assured by good information, that the ice of any frozen lake or river he has occasion to pass over, is sufficiently strong to support him; and yet is timorous, and doubts whether he will be safe if he should venture upon it; it is plain he does not confide in, or give credit to the report he heard; for if he did, he would be as much assured of his own safety, as of the truth of the report, or the veracity of him that made it. The application is easy. Upon the whole, it is evident, that till a man believes, and is in some measure assured of *his own* justification and salvation through the righteousness and blood of Christ, he never truly believes the report of the Gospel, or the divine testimony concerning the same. Let the reader then judge whether there is any truth or sense in asserting, that the hearers of the Gospel, have no warrant to believe any thing but

what is infallibly true whether they believe it or not."—To which, I answer,

1. It is written, *He is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by him.* I hear the report, I understand it, I believe it with all my heart; and in the belief of it, *I come to God by Christ* for salvation. I am conscious to myself I do so. And so I believe I shall be saved. But what I believe is true before I believe it, and whether I believe it or not. For he who *comes to God by Christ,* shall be saved, whatever doubts he may have of his good estate. And here is nothing believed but upon good evidence. And nothing like their "strange kind of assurance," which is worked up "without any evidence of the thing." As Mr. Marshall honestly states the case.——For,

2. On their scheme *they believe they shall be saved* without any consciousness of their *coming to God by Christ,* as Mr. Wilson declares over and over again. p. 102. 123. They believe their *sins are forgiven,* without any consciousness of *repentance, conversion,* or *faith in the blood* of Christ. They believe they shall have a safe passage over the lake, without any consciousness of venturing or walking on it. And so they believe something to be true, which in fact is not true; and which at the day of judgment will be found to be a lie.

Come, candid reader, come go with me, to the side of a frozen lake: view the ice with your own eyes, and behold and see it is full ten feet thick. And will not this bear the weight of a single man? Yea, will it not bear the weight of a thousand men? You therefore cannot doubt of the safety of venturing upon it, "without rebelling against the light of your reason, senses, and conscience." And if you venture upon it, it is equally evident you will be safe. "You are constrained to believe it by the clearest evidence." It is true before you believe it. You are certain it is true from "the clearest evidence." You are then at the furthest distance from any thing like their faith, nor have you the least occasion to work up yourself to believe any thing "which is not true before you believe it, without any evidence of the thing." So,

Come, O enlightened sinner, whose eyes are opened to see the whole Gospel plan in its glory: Come, view this way of

salvation with your own eyes. See God the Father, the infinitely glorious Majesty of heaven and earth, to magnify his law which this revolted world all join to hate, and to condemn sin, which this apostate world all join to justify; even see him set forth his own Son, of equal glory with himself, to be a propitiation, to declare his righteousness, that consistently with the honour of his government he may pardon the penitent sinner that comes to him in the name of Christ, and looks only to free grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus. View the infinite dignity of the Mediator; view his mediatorial character, office, and work; see how he has, in his life and death, magnified the law and made it honourable; see the eternal Father, how infinitely well pleased he is, in what his Son has done. He raises him from the dead; sets him at his own right hand; *repentance and remission of sins* are proclaimed to a guilty world in his name; and the cry is, *repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out*. Can there be a doubt now whether it is safe to venture your all opon this Mediator, and return to God in his name? Infinitely hateful, odious, and ill-deserving as you are! impossible! So sure as Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah; so sure as he died on the cross, and now reigns at his Father's right hand; even so sure and certain it is, that it is safe for a sinner, for the greatest sinner, for any sinner, to repent and come to God in his NAME. "Are you not constrained to believe this, by the clearest evidence?" And is it not equally certain, that if you repent, and *come to God in the name of Christ*, venturing your all for eternity wholly and entirely upon his atonement, righteousness, and merits, and the infinitely free grace of God through him, as revealed in the Gospel; that you shall be safe, eternally safe? And therefore, in exact proportion as you are conscious of these things, you may be certain of your own safety in particular. Nor have you any need, or any manner of occasion, to believe any thing to be true which is not true; or to believe without evidence. Nay, you are set at the greatest distance from this kind of blind faith. But on the other hand,

What course for comfort, can an impenitent, unconverted, Christless sinner, while such, blind to the glory of God, to

the beauty of his law, and to the glory and all-sufficiency of Christ, take? If he will *believe his sins are forgiven*, when in fact they are not forgiven; and he knows in his conscience they are not; he must "believe without any evidence of the thing." And to call this *faith in Christ*; to call this *trusting wholly in the righteousness of Christ*, is to put darkness for light; and to substitute in the room of Christ, a lie, and nothing but a lie, as the sole object of their faith.

Arg. 3. From the nature of that faith which was required of the Israelites; and for the want of which they could not enter into the land of Canaan. "When God gave the children of Israel a promise of entering into the land of Canaan," says Mr. Wilson, I presume "it will not be denied, that they had not only a warrant, but that it was their indispensable duty to believe that he would bring them to the possession of it, notwithstanding the difficulties they might have to encounter by the way; yet it cannot be said it was infallibly true that they should enter into the promised land whether they believed or not; for the event proved the contrary. It is evident then, that they were called to believe something that was not infallibly true, whether they believed it or not." p. 18, 19. "This is equally true of the promise of the Gospel made to sinners, of mankind indefinitely." p. 23. For "God hath given to all who hear the Gospel, a promise of entering into his rest of heaven; which gives every one of them sufficient warrant to believe that he shall be saved." p. 23, 24. "This promise is the first and immediate foundation of faith. It is only by an appropriating and fiducial persuasion thereof, that any one can commence a true believer of the Gospel, or attain to any certain knowledge of his eternal election." p. 25. However, the thing to be believed is not true before they believe it, and never will be true unless they do believe it. p. 18—26. And therefore he concludes, that in justifying faith we believe that to be true which is not true before we believe it. To this I answer,

1. The promise which God made to Abraham, and confirmed by an oath, in Gen. xxii. 16. referred to Num. xiv. 30. (for God never did confirm *by an oath* his promise to that congregation who came out of Egypt; there is no such

thing on Scripture record. Therefore Num. xiv. 30. has reference to Gen. xxii. 16.) I say, the promise which God made to Abraham, and confirmed by an oath, in Gen. xxii. 16. to give the land of Canaan to his seed, was unconditional and absolute. And by it God obliged himself to give Abraham a seed, and in due time, in spite of all obstacles, whether from their own temper or the opposition of others, to bring them to, and put them in possession of the land of Canaan. And had God by any means eventually failed of doing this thing, he would have been chargeable with the breach of that promise which he made to Abraham.

Now this absolute promise to Abraham, was a shadow of that absolute promise which God the Father made to his Son, on his undertaking to offer up himself a sacrifice for the sins of men; that he should *see his seed and prolong his days;* that he should *see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied.* Isai. liii. By which promise the Father absolutely obliged himself, that all Christ's seed should finally be brought to the heavenly Canaan, notwithstanding all opposition from their own hearts, and from every other quarter. And if by any means any one of Christ's seed should finally perish, God would be chargeable with a breach of that promise made to his Son.

But as St. Paul reasons, Rom. ix. 6. *All are not Israel which are of Israel;* so not all the seed of Abraham, according to the flesh, had an interest in the absolute promise of the earthly Canaan, in the sense in which God originally intended it, and in the sense in which he afterwards explained it. For Ishmael, who was a child of Abraham, was first cast off. And afterwards Esau was rejected. And afterwards six hundred thousand were cast off at once. And all in perfect consistence with the divine promise to Abraham. Nor was there, as Mr. Wilson insinuates, the least show or appearance of any breach of promise. This was merely the impious and blasphemous construction the wicked Israelites put upon the divine conduct. For by an *appropriating act of faith,* exactly of the same nature with that Mr. Wilson pleads for, they had been fully persuaded, that they *in particular* should come to the land of Canaan. And therefore,

on their disappointment, were ready to charge God with a breach of promise. Num. xiv. 3. To which God, in great wrath, says, *and ye shall know my breach of promise.* As if he had said, "This is what you impiously charge me with. But, unmoved to alter my determination by your impious charge, in the wilderness you shall die: and if you call this a breach of promise, you shall know I will break it thus; for assuredly your carcasses shall fall in the wilderness. And this is a lively type of the final doom which will be passed at the great day, on all impenitent sinners, who by an *appropriating act* of faith, have taken all the promises to themselves, while in fact not one of them ever belonged to them in the sense in which they imagined. *So they shall know God's breach of promise,* just as the wicked Israelites did.

2. The absolute promise of the land of Canaan made to Abraham, had no respect to any who were not of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh. And therefore, unless a man could produce his genealogy, and prove himself a descendant of Abraham, he could by that promise, claim no right or share in the land of Canaan: for without this, all the good qualifications in the world would be no weight to give a man a right to an inheritance in that land.

So the absolute promise of the heavenly Canaan made to Christ, has no respect to any but those who are Christ's seed: those who are in Christ. And therefore, unless a professed Christian can produce good proof that he is in Christ, he can claim no title to heaven by virtue of that absolute promise. Our own righteousness, in this case, can give no title at all. *But if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* Gal. iii. 29.

When, therefore, any man who is unconscious that he is united to Christ by faith, is bold to put in a claim to the heavenly Canaan, he is guilty of the grossest presumption, and has no evidence to support his claim "from Scripture, sense, or reason."

3. God's promise in Exod. iii. 17. made to that congregation which died in the wilderness, of bringing them to the land of Canaan, was not an absolute, but a conditional promise, as is plain beyond all dispute from Numb. xxxii. 6—15.

which the reader is desired to turn to. And indeed the conditions, although not expressed in that promise, Exod. iii. 17. were plainly implied in the very nature of the thing. For if they should, from an attachment to the pleasures and manners of Egypt, and from a mean and low opinion of the land of Canaan, or from a distrust of the divine power and fidelity to conduct them safely thither, decline, and finally refuse to march for Canaan; or if after they set out on their journey, repent they ever entered on the expedition, and desire to go back again; neither they, nor any mortal else, would have had any reason to imagine, that God was obliged by that promise he made to them in Exod. iii. 17. to bring them there. God's promise, then, to bring that congregation to Canaan, left him at full liberty to kill them by hundreds and thousands, if *they rebelled against the Lord,* instead of cordially falling in with his proposal; yea, to doom all their carcasses to fall in the wilderness. It is absolutely certain, by the divine conduct, that God viewed it in this light.——And therefore,

They had no warrant, not one single soul of them, to believe absolutely, when they left Egypt, that they should come to Canaan. It is certain Moses understood the matter thus, from Numb. xxxii. 6—15. Nor had they any warrant to believe any further than this, viz. that if they would cordially fall in with the divine proposal, and from their inmost soul bid an everlasting farewell to all the manners and pleasures of Egypt, set their whole hearts on the holy land, enlist under the banner of the God of Abraham, cleave to him with all their hearts, march after him, trust his wisdom, sufficiency, and fidelity, to conduct them thither, his power to overcome all obstacles, and so courageously march after him into the holy land, and fight under him against the seven nations of Canaan, and persevere till they had obtained a complete victory; then, and in this way, and in no other, might they expect to come to the possession of that good land. He therefore, who found within himself an heart prepared and disposed to all this, might reasonably expect to arrive to a possession of that good land. Unless for special and wise reasons, God should think fit, instead of the earthly, to give

him an inheritance in the heavenly Canaan. And therefore, if the wicked Israelites, when they came out of Egypt, far, very far, from such a temper and disposition, did confidently believe they should come to the promised land, they had, in fact, no warrant for their belief. Nor did God hold himself obliged to order things so that it should be unto them according to their faith; but thought himself at full liberty to lead them into such trying circumstances, as should effectually discover their unbelief, enmity against God, attachment to Egypt, low thoughts of Canaan; all which were consistent with that appropriating belief they had when they left Egypt, that they should get to Canaan. And when their hearts were thus discovered, God held himself at liberty, notwithstanding any promise he had made to them, to doom them all to death.

And just so it is in the present case. The Gospel promises eternal life, absolutely and unconditionally to no child of Adam: nor has any child of Adam any warrant to believe absolutely and unconditionally, that he shall be saved. But the Gospel brings the news of the glories of the heavenly Canaan, where God the supreme good is to be for ever enjoyed, and represents to our view an almighty Saviour and Conductor; invites us to sell all for the pearl of great price; from our inmost soul bid an eternal farewell to the pleasures and manners of Egypt; lay up all our treasures and hopes in heaven, deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Christ to the end of our lives, placing our whole dependance on the merits of his blood, and the influences of his spirit; and promises that all such shall finally arrive safe to the heavenly Canaan: but denounces damnation against all the rest. He then who is conscious that he has such an heart in him, may expect to see that good land. But if any, unconscious of this, firmly believe they shall assuredly inherit eternal life, their faith is absolutely "without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason;" just as Mr. Marshall says. And they may depend upon it, that God does not hold himself obliged, that *according to their faith so shall it be to them.* For if men will believe things which God never promised, he is not obliged to answer their presumptuous expectations, how

much soever they may pervert his word to make themselves believe that he is. If they will affirm, that although it is not true before they believe it, yet if they believe it is true, it will become true; still God never said so. God never enjoined this kind of faith; nor will he ever answer the expectations it begets.

The Israelites *could not enter in, because of unbelief.* Spiritual blindness is the source of unbelief. 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. They were blind to the being and perfections of God. They did not see that the God of Abraham was an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable Being; the supreme all-sufficient good, infinitely worthy of supreme love, and the most entire confidence, trust, and dependance. Rather they entertained a low idea of God. And hence when things looked dark, and they come to a pinch, it appeared that they did not think in their hearts that he was a Being fit to be believed and trusted.—And so they did not think in their hearts, that if they should venture to take his word and march after him to Canaan, that it would end well. *Their walls were built up to heaven, and the sons of Anak were there.* And therefore they were heartily sorry they had ever left Egypt, and wished themselves back again; they magnified the glory of the land of Egypt, and spake contemptibly of the land of Canaan; they blasphemed God, and were on the point of stoning Caleb and Joshua. Thus they *could not enter in because of unbelief;* i. e. of their unbelief of those things which were true whether they believed them or not. For God was an absolutely perfect Being, fit to be believed and trusted.—And if they had believed him to be such, and in that belief ventured to trust him, and march after him to Canaan, it would have ended well. These things were true, whether they believed them or no. And there was sufficient evidence of their truth. And it was this that rendered their unbelief so criminal. Whereas had these things not been true, but false; had they known they were false, they could not have been at all to blame for their unbelief. And God never did, and never will, blame his creatures for unbelief, when he knows, and they know, that there is no evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason, that the things to be believed are true.

Arg. 4. From those words, in Mark. xi. 23, 24. "*Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whoatsoever he saith. Therefore, I say unto you, what things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.* From these words it is plain," says Mr. Wilson, "that men may have sufficient warrant to believe some things which cannot be said to be infallibly true, whether they believe them or not." p. 27. To which I answer,

1. That the faith here spoken of, is the faith of miracles. And it was true before they believed it; that if they were at any time inspired by immediate revelation, to declare that such a particular miracle should be wrought, it should be done. When therefore the immediate suggestion of the divine spirit came into their minds, prompting them to declare that a particular miraculous event should happen, they had from that and from the promise of Christ, full evidence to believe that it would be done on their declaration. And on this ground Peter had a good warrant to say to the lame man, in Acts iii. *Rise up and walk:* and full evidence before he spake, to believe that on his speaking the man would be healed. And so again here was nothing like their "strange kind of assurance, without any evidence of the thing."

2. But if any are disposed to understand the promise in the 24th verse, in a larger latitude, to respect all the prayers of true saints; *Whatsoever thing ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them;* yet even then the words will not prove that we ought to believe that to be true which is not true before we believe it. For it is true before we believe it, that whatsoever we ask the Father, in Christ's name, agreeable to God's will, shall be given to us, Mat. vii. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. John xvi. 23, 24. When therefore any one desires, and is conscious to himself, that he has an heart to ask the offered blessings of the Gospel, in the name of Christ, he cannot but know, if he believes the Gospel to be true, that he shall have them. For he is "constrained to believe it, by the clearest evidence." For he has the express promise of

Christ in the case. As if I should say to my child, "whenever you want bread, ask me for it, and you shall have it. I will never fail in any one instance to give it to you. You may therefore come in the full assurance of faith, nothing doubting but that you shall receive it. For this I establish as an invariable rule by which I will conduct towards you; viz. *Ask and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find.* When therefore you want bread, and have a heart to ask it in the manner you know I would have you, you may know before you ask that you shall receive. And so you may ask, *believing you shall receive, and you shall have it.*" And now again, in all this, there is nothing like their "strange kind of assurance;" nothing like believing "without any evidence of the thing;" and believing "that to be true which is not true before we believe it." For it is true whether we believe it or not, that whatsoever we ask in Christ's name shall be given us. And we have the highest evidence of the thing. What it is to ask in Christ's name, has been already shown. (Essay, Sect. IV. and V.)

3. In order to make this text serve the purpose of supporting their scheme, it must be understood thus: "O, Christless, impenitent, unconverted sinner, who art in an unpardoned state, under the wrath and curse of God, impenitent as thou art, believe thy sins are forgiven, and they shall be forgiven. I do not say as Peter did, *repent and be converted, that thy sins may be blotted out.* But I say, impenitent as thou art, and certain as thou art, of thine impenitency, without any evidence of the thing, from Scripture, sense, or reason, believe thy sins are blotted out, and it shall be unto thee according to thy faith. For although it is not true before thou believest it, in believing it to be true it shall become true. Believe therefore thy sins are forgiven, and they shall be forgiven." This is the spirit and soul of that evangelical preaching in fashion with these men. See p. 102. 123. 175, &c.—But neither that text in *Mark*, nor any other in the bible, gives the least countenance to their scheme.

Thus we have taken a view of the arguments which Mr. Wilson uses to prove, that in justifying faith "we believe that to be true which is not true before we believe it." And

thus we have finished what was at first proposed. And his scheme, in contrast with that of the gross Antinomians, stands thus:

Gross Antinomianism, and refined Antinomianism, agree in asserting, that in justifying faith we believe that our sins are forgiven, and that God is reconciled to us.

Gross Antinomians assert, 1. That the elect are justified before faith. 2. That their justification is manifested to them by the spirit of God. 3. In consequence of which, they believe they are justified. 4. This belief pacifies their consciences, and is the source of every religious affection.

Refined Antinomians, assert, 1. That before faith, the elect as well as others, are under the wrath of God and curse of the law. 2. That yet in faith they believe God loves them, and they are delivered from the curse of the law. 3. And because this is not true before it is believed, therefore they believe it without any evidence of the thing. 4. This belief pacifies the conscience, and is the source of every religious affection. Now,

If the elect are not justified before faith, the gross Antinomian scheme is fundamentally false.—And,

If in justifying faith, we are not to believe that to be true which is not true before we believe it, the refined Antinomian scheme is also fundamentally false.

The fact believed on both schemes is the same, viz. that an impenitent, unconverted, Christless sinner, is justified. And a belief of this fact on both schemes produces the same effects, viz. pacifies the conscience, and is the source of all their religion. And both schemes grant that this fact is not revealed in the bible. But one vindicates his belief by saying, the elect are justified before faith, and have their justification immediately revealed to them by the spirit of God. And the other by saying, we are commanded by God to believe that to be true which is not true before we believe it, and to believe without any evidence of the thing, and God stands obliged that our faith shall not be disappointed.

We have heard how the celebrated Mr. Marshall explains his scheme; and we have considered what Mr. Wilson has to offer in its defence. And the controversy is brought into a

narrow compass, to one single point. viz. whether in justifying faith we believe that to be true which is not true before we believe it. And it is brought down out of the clouds, and made plain and easy to the weakest capacity, and every one is freely left to judge for himself.

If after all, any poor bewildered sinner is still at a loss, let him take his bible in his hand, enter into his closet, fall on his knees, look up to God who has given him the bible to be the only rule of his faith, and say, " O Lord, thou hast given me thy holy word to be the only rule of my faith; and is it safe, great God, for me to venture my soul for eternity in the belief of that which all acknowledge is not revealed in thy holy word? If every truth contained in that sacred book, all which are true before they are believed, join to declare me an unpardoned sinner, O leave me not to quiet my conscience by the belief of that which is not revealed there! O suffer me not to fly from the unerring word of my final Judge, and take refuge in a lie! Rather let me have no peace than a false peace! O lead me out of this bewildered state, and give me an heart to understand and believe thy holy word, and make that the only rule of my faith, of thine infinite mercy through Jesus Christ." Then let him turn to read, and well consider the following texts. Mat. vii. 21—27. Acts iii. 19. Luke xiii. 3. 5. Isai. lv. 7. Prov. xxviii. 13. Acts xx. 21. John iii. 19, 20. 2 Cor. xi. 13, 14. Luke iv. 9, 10, 11. 1 John ii. 4.

THAT THERE IS BUT

ONE COVENANT,

WHEREOF

BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER ARE SEALS;

VIZ.

THE COVENANT OF GRACE,

PROVED FROM THE WORD OF GOD;

AND THE DOCTRINE OF AN

EXTERNAL GRACELESS COVENANT,

LATELY ADVANCED BY THE REV. MR. MOSES MATHER,

IN A PAMPHLET, ENTITLED,

THE VISIBLE CHURCH IN COVENANT WITH GOD, &c.

SHOWN TO BE AN UNSCRIPTURAL DOCTRINE.

But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth? PSALM l. 16.

PREFACE.

IF we may judge of the sentiments of ministers, in general, by the pieces lately published on this controversy, all are agreed in these three propositions, viz.

I. *There is but one covenant, a profession of a compliance with which is requisite to an admission into the visible church of Christ, in complete standing.*

II. *Those who really comply with this covenant have, in the sight of God, an equal right to baptism for their children, and to the Lord's supper for themselves.*

III. *All scruples to the contrary are groundless and unscriptural.*

There is, therefore, but one single point which now needs to be settled, to decide the whole controversy, viz. *With what covenant are we to profess a compliance, the covenant of grace, or a graceless covenant?*

And this point is of such a nature, that it seems necessary to settle it before we proceed to act at all in church affairs; in gathering a church, settling a minister, admitting members, or administering sealing ordinances. For until this is settled, we know not upon what covenant the church is to be formed, nor what covenant is to be professed by those who are to be admitted, nor what covenant is to be sealed by baptism and the Lord's supper, nor what covenant the minister is to preach up and hold out to public view, as the thing to be complied with by professors, and to be sealed by the sacraments. So that if we mean to proceed like rational creatures, in our church-affairs, we must look this matter to the bottom, and come to a determination.

To say, that it is needless to determine this point, is the same thing as to say, that it is of no consequence whether our churches are founded on a right covenant, or on a wrong one; or whether God's seals are fixed to the covenant he designed, or to a covenant to which he never intended they should be affixed; which none will pretend to say: for, if it is of no consequence what covenant we profess, nor what covenant

we seal, a right one or a wrong one; it is surely of no consequence whether we profess or seal any covenant at all; which to say, is to tear up by the roots all notion of a visible church in the world. But to set aside a visible church, as a needless thing, is to set aside christianity, as an imposture. There must be christian churches; there must be a public profession of some covenant or other; there must be sealing ordinances; these ordinances must be administered by the ministers of Christ to the proper subjects; it must be determined who they are; it must, therefore, be determined on what covenant churches are to be formed, and what covenant is to be preached up, professed, and sealed. It is a controversy, which no honest man, who means to have any thing to do in church affairs, can let alone, as a mere circumstantial point. Much less can those, who are already in the ministry, or are about to settle in that work, consistently content themselves to proceed without any settled scheme at all; unless all they aim at is to live a quiet life, right or wrong; which is what none will profess to do.

Our churches were originally founded on a profession of a compliance with the covenant of grace, at least generally. And indeed, I know not of one church in New-England, of our denomination, which is now otherwise founded, if we may judge of their foundation by the words of the covenant which is read to those who are admitted to full communion. So far as I know, the formulas in use express the chief things contained in the covenant of grace: "That they avouch the Lord to be their God and chief good, and give up themselves to him, through Jesus Christ, to live to him and seek his glory." And therefore, should we be convinced that the covenant of grace is not the covenant with which the church of Christ ought to profess a compliance, there ought to be an alteration in our formulas. For, as they stand at present, they tend to lead all persons whose consciences are awake, to think they ought to be converted, before they make a profession of religion, and join in full communion with the church. For, such do not think it right to profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, when they know they have no grace. Nor do they think it consistent with moral honesty, to give

their consent to the covenant in a sense different from its plain and natural sense. There is a necessity, therefore, if the covenant of grace is not the covenant which ought to be entered into, to call our churches together, to point out to them plainly this fundamental error in their constitution, and to lead them to vote out the covenant of grace, and to vote in a graceless covenant, in order to open a wide and effectual door to let ungodly men, as such, into our churches. And in this method, may be adopted regularly the new scheme advanced by the Rev. Mr. Moses Mather, an ingenious writer, in his piece lately published, entitled, "The visible church in covenant with God," &c.

This author has offered this doctrine of an *external graceless covenant* to public consideration, as taught in the word of God, and as the only consistent plan on which the visible church can be founded, and infant baptism vindicated. He had no desire, it may be presumed, that his scheme should be received by our churches without examination. The strictest scrutiny cannot hurt the truth. The truth, like the sun, can bear to be looked upon, without any diminution of its lustre. A glow-worm is in danger of losing its brightness, if the light of day shines around it. This may be the nature of error; but the truth itself, the more strictly it is examined, the more will it appear to be like *the morning light, which shines more and more to the perfect day.*

Our confession of faith, and plan of church discipline, have determined for "the covenant of grace," declaring that "sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace [a];" and for the necessity of a profession of a "cordial subjection to Jesus Christ." But these are not the word of God. Mr. Mather undertakes to prove his doctrine from the word of God. And we ought, with the utmost readiness, to give up all human composures, when found inconsistent with the word of God. He appeals to Scripture: we join in the appeal; and let him that readeth, understand.

Bethlem, June 15, 1769.

a See Con. Faith, chap. 27.

SECTION. I.

The nature of Mr. M.'s external, graceless covenant, its difference from the covenant of grace, and a general view of the subject.

BY the covenant of grace, Mr. M. means, that covenant with which every true believer complies in the exercise of repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and which promises pardon and eternal life to all who comply with it. Or to use his own words, "a sure promise of eternal life, to all such as with a true heart believe in Jesus Christ." p. 4. And in this we are agreed. But he maintains, that this is not the covenant, a compliance with which is to be publicly professed by any of the followers of Christ, when they join in full communion with the church. It is a chief design of this piece to prove this point. And in this we differ.

By the external covenant, he means, not the covenant of grace, externally entered into by a public profession of a compliance with it, which is what some divines have meant by the phrase; but a covenant specifically different from the covenant of grace. It differs from it in three things. 1. The covenant of grace requires holiness, a holy faith, a holy repentance, a holy obedience: the external covenant requires no holiness at all. 2. The covenant of grace is complied with by none but the regenerate, in the exercise of holiness: the external covenant may be complied with by the unregenerate, by those that have no grace. 3. The covenant of grace promises eternal life: the external covenant promises no such thing; but leaves those who comply with it, and do no more, under the sentence of the divine law, to eternal death. This appears through the whole performance. We maintain that there is no such covenant; he endeavours to prove that this is the only covenant, a compliance with which was professed by Abraham, by the Israelites in the wilderness, and by the apostolic converts, when they entered visibly into covenant with God, and became members of God's visible church; as

will be plain to any one that reads his book. We affirm that a profession of a compliance with this covenant God never required of any man.

There is a covenant of grace, indeed, according to Mr. M. which promises eternal life to the true believer, to which this external covenant, he says, serves as means to the end. p. 9. But a compliance with this covenant of grace never was required, and never was professed, in order to sealing ordinances, under the Old Testament or the New; for the seals were not designed primarily to be seals of the covenant of grace, but of a graceless covenant, with which graceless men may comply in the sight of God, while such. And so there is no need of a compliance with the covenant of grace, in order to a consistent attendance on sealing ordinances. p. 36, 37. As graceless men may comply with this graceless covenant; so they may consistently be active in sealing it. And so there is not the least need of our being born again, or the least occasion of a profession of godliness, or making any pretence of love to God or Christ, or to vital piety, in order to a regular admission into the church of Christ. We need not be saints in reality, or in profession; in the sight of God, or in the sight of men, no such thing is required: no such thing is pretended. For "the external covenant does not respect a gracious state of heart, as the qualification requisite to a person's entering into it." p. 22. *A church of Christ, therefore, is a congregation in which there is no visible profession made of real christianity;* i. e. *of friendship to Christ, or of christian grace, or of any thing but what is consistent with a state of total enmity to God and Christ, and to all spiritual good.* This is Mr. M.'s idea of a visible church; and any higher profession he thinks of very bad tendency. p. 51, 52, 53.

If the least spark of grace is required in the external covenant, or if the least spark of grace is professed invisibly entering into it, then the man that knows he has no grace, but is dead in sin, cannot make a profession, and Mr. M.'s end is frustrated, which was to open a wide and effectual door for such as know themselves to be ungodly, to join in full communion with the church.

And if this external covenant does not require the least degree of grace or holiness; then it requires nothing but ungracious, unholy, sinful performance, (for Mr. M. will not choose to say, that there is a system of religious volitions, affections, and actions, which are neither virtuous nor vicious, neither holy nor sinful; neither conformable to the holy nature and law of God, nor unconformable; for this would be to suppose that the divine law is not a universal rule of life.) So that, although Abraham and all Abraham's spiritual seed, when they first comply with the covenant of grace, exercise real holiness, and live in the exercise of holiness through the course of their lives, agreeable to our Saviour's character of them, in Mat. vii. 24. and attend the means of grace in a holy manner, (Mat. xiii. 8.) and even hate and abhor that impenitent, self-righteous, sinful manner in which all the ungodly attend them, (Prov. xv. 8.) yet when they come to make a public profession, they are to covenant and promise to attend all means in no better manner than that in which impenitent, self-righteous sinners do. For they are publicly to profess and promise nothing but a compliance with the external covenant: and the external covenant requires nothing more. And having made this ungodly profession, and by covenant bound themselves to attend all means of grace in this manner, they set to it God's appointed seal; and this unholy covenant the most holy Christian is to renew and seal every time he comes to the table of the Lord till he dies; but how this can possibly be done with a good conscience, Mr. M. has not yet told us [b].

[b] The external covenant is a graceless covenant, suited to the hearts of graceless men. Therefore to be in heart conformed to the external covenant, is to have a heart destitute of grace. Every true convert therefore renounces the external covenant in his heart at the time of his conversion, and complies with the covenant of grace. Nor can he ever go back to the external covenant in his heart without falling from grace. So that if Abraham was in the covenant of grace before, as Mr. M. says he was, p. 8. then he fell from grace when he entered into the external covenant. And if by sealing the external covenant he obliged himself to conform to it as long as he lived, he did thereby bind himself to continue unconverted till death. But the covenant with Abraham was an *everlasting covenant*. Gen. xvii. 7. To which Abraham was obliged to conform in heart and life as long as he lived.

Thus we have taken a brief and general view of Mr. M.'s scheme of an external graceless covenant. I think I understand him right. But if any of his admirers should say this is not his scheme, but the external covenant requires real holiness, and the public profession is to be accordingly a profession of godliness, then those who know themselves to be unconverted, are as much shut out from full communion in the visible church on his scheme, as on the scheme of our forefathers; which Dr. Increase Mather affirmed to be the scheme of protestants in general, in opposition to papists. "I do readily acknowledge," says he, "that as it is only a justifying faith which giveth right to baptism before God; so it is the profession, or visibility of this faith, that giveth right thereunto before the church. Some have maintained that a dogmatical historical faith, or faith of assent to the truth of the Gospel, doth entitle to baptism. But the common protestant doctrine against the papists, speaketh otherwise[c]."

But the question now before us is not, what was the doctrine of protestants or papists? but a question much more interesting, viz. What is the doctrine of the bible? the only book we are obliged to believe and obey on pain of God's eternal wrath. And the question is, what is God's covenant, which is to be professed and sealed; a gracious, or an ungracious covenant? What was the Abrahamic covenant; and what the covenant into which the Israelites professed to enter in the wilderness? and what is that covenant revealed in the Gospel, of which baptism and the Lord's supper are seals, an holy covenant, or an unholy one?

But before we enter on the subject, it may not be improper to observe, that Mr. M. has given up the grounds on which Mr. Jonathan Dickinson, and after him Mr. Peter Clark, vindicated infant baptism, viz. That the covenant with Abraham was the covenant of grace. See Mr. Clark's *Defence of Infant Baptism*, ch. iv. in which the covenant with Abraham is proved to be the covenant of grace; and Dr. Gill's objections in his piece against Mr. Dickinson, some of them the same with Mr. Mather's, are answered. And Mr. M. endea-

c Discourse concerning the subject of Baptism, p. 52.

vours to lay a new foundation for infant baptism, perhaps never before laid by any writer on that subject, viz. An external graceless covenant; and what the effect among common people will be, if they shall see Mr. M.'s external covenant proved to be a mere non-entity, cannot yet be known. But if any are shaken in their belief of infant baptism, when they find Mr. M.'s foundation give way under them, they ought to remember, that the defenders of infant baptism have not built their arguments on this foundation, but always on a supposition that the covenant with Abraham was the covenant of grace.

Thus Mr. Bostwick, late minister of the presbyterian church in New-York, in his *Vindication of Infant Baptism*, p. 19. says, "*The covenant made with Abraham was a covenant of grace, and the same for substance that is now in force under the Gospel.* This I look upon to be the grand turning point on which the issue of the controversy very much depends; for if Abraham's covenant, which included his infant children, and gave them a right to circumcision, was not the covenant of grace, then I freely confess that the main ground on which we assert the right of infants to baptism, is taken away; and consequently, the principal arguments in support of the doctrine are overturned."

SECTION II.

The covenant with Abraham was a holy covenant, and could not be really complied with but in the exercise of real holiness.

SHOULD a dispute arise concerning the contents of any covenant between two of our neighbours, what way would common sense teach all impartial men to advise them to take, in order to settle the controversy? Would they not say, "come, neighbours, no more dispute about this matter, bring out the writing, let us read it, and see with our own eyes how the bond runs?"

Now these are the contents of the covenant with Abraham, in Gen. xii. where it is first of all mentioned; "Now the

Lord had said unto Abram, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and *in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*" And was this a graceless covenant, or the very Gospel of Christ? Hear what an inspired apostle saith, Gal. iii. 8. *And the Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying,* IN THEE SHALL ALL NATIONS BE BLESSED. And in Gen. xii. 4. follows an account of Abraham's compliance. *So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him.* He did not merely "endeavour," but he actually complied. And was this done in faith, or in a graceless manner? Take the answer from an inspired writer. Heb. xi. 8. *By* FAITH *Abraham, when he was called to go out,* &c. *obeyed.* Just parallel to the conduct of Christ's true disciple, when he was on earth. Mark. ii. 14. *And he said unto him, follow me, and he arose and followed him.*

And this same covenant was renewed on God's part in Gen. xv. 5. *And he brought him forth abroad, and said, look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them. And he said unto him, so shall thy seed be.* And in ver. 6. follows Abraham's compliance; *and he believed in the Lord.* And the very next words determine that this was not Mr. M.'s external covenant, in a compliance with which no man is justified, and that Abraham's faith was a true justifying, saving faith; *and he counted it to him for righteousness.*

And in chap. xvii. this same covenant was renewed again with this additional declaration, *I am God Almighty,* absolutely all-sufficient. For he had before said, chap. xv. *I am thy shield, and exceeding great reward;* which is something of a higher nature than what is promised by Mr. M.'s external covenant; yea, it is added, *to be a God to thee, and thy seed after thee.* In consequence of which he was called *the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;* and what is implied in this we may learn from Heb. xi. 16.

Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city. Yea, all the great blessings of the Gospel are summed up in one promise, Rev. xxi. 7. *He that overcometh shall inherit all things,* AND I WILL BE HIS GOD. And this divine injunction was added at this season of renewing this covenant, *walk before me, and be thou perfect*; which implied a life of real holiness, and sincere devotedness to God.

Mr. M.'s external covenant requires no higher kind of faith than the devil has, and nothing but ungracious, unholy obedience, which those who are dead in sin may perform: But neither this faith nor this obedience were the faith and obedience of Abraham. Mr. M.'s covenant requires what James calls a *dead faith,* by which no man can be justified; but Abraham's was a *living faith,* by which he was justified, and by which all others will be justified who have it. And his obedience was an holy obedience, such as is peculiar to the friends of God. Mr. M.'s external covenant, is adapted to the temper and state of the unconverted, requiring only such religious exercises as may take place in them. But Abraham was not in an unconverted state; and so Mr. M.'s external covenant was not adapted to the temper and state in which he was, if the reader will be at the pains to take his bible and turn to Gen. xii. and read the whole history of Abraham's life, he will not find the least hint of more than one covenant with Abraham; nor was one unholy duty ever required at his hands: rather on the contrary, these were the express words of God Almighty to him, *walk before me, and be thou perfect.* If therefore we judge of the nature of the covenant with Abraham, as we do of all other written covenants, viz. by the contents of the written instrument, there is no room to doubt.

And now this covenant being thus made, and thus renewed from time to time, through the space of above twenty years, an external seal was at length by GOD appointed to it. For circumcision was appointed as a token of this very covenant, which was made with Abraham before he was circumcised. For an inspired apostle has said it. Rom. iv. 9, 10, 11. "Cometh this blessedness, (viz. that spoken of in

the foregoing verse, 'blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin,') then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say, that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal, (not of Mr. M.'s external covenant, but) of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised; that he might be the father, (not of those graceless men, that enter into Mr. M.'s graceless covenant, but) of all them that believe; that righteousness might be imputed to them also." That all who comply with that covenant as Abraham did himself, might be justified and saved, as he was. From all which it is evident that that covenant with which Abraham visibly complied, when in obedience to God's call, he separated himself and his family from the idolatrous world to worship the true God only, and to believe in, and wait for, the coming of the Messiah, whose *day he saw, and was glad,* was not Mr. M.'s external graceless covenant, by which no man can be justified and saved; but the covenant of grace, which promises eternal life to those who comply with it; *for God is not the God of the dead, but of the living,* Mat. xxii. 31, 32.; and that circumcision was a seal of this very covenant. Which were the points to be proved.

There is not one text in the New Testament where the nature of the covenant with Abraham is pointed out, but that it is spoken of as the covenant of grace; for it is always spoken of as the way, and as the only way, in which a sinner can be justified. Particularly, read the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and the 3d and 4th chapters to the Galatians, and this will appear in the clearest light. For from the manner in which Abraham was justified, Paul illustrates and confirms the Gospel way of justification. For he considers Abraham as the pattern, and teaches that all sinners are justified in the same way in which he was; and in this sense he is "the Father of many nations, as he is the Father of all that believe." Rom. iv. 16, 17. "For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." Ver. 3. "Now it is not written for his

sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead." Ver. 23, 24. "Know ye, therefore, that they which are of faith, (who are true believers,) the same are the children of Abraham." Gal. iii, 7. "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which are of faith, (i. e. are true believers,) are blessed with faithful Abraham." Ver. 8. 9. But ver. 10. "All self-righteous sinners are under the curse; for as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." But ver. 13, 14. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the spirit through faith. For it is the peculiar privilege of believers to have the spirit." Rom. viii. 9. "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Gal. iv. 6, 7. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. And if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." But chap. iii. 26. "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ." Ver. 29. "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." For, ver. 16. "To Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ. Therefore, if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

So that if we read the contents of the written instrument, as it is recorded in the Old Testament, or consider how the inspired writers of the New, understood it, nothing can be plainer than that the covenant with Abraham, into which the believing Gentiles are received under the Gospel dispensation, was the covenant of grace, even that covenant in which, and in which alone, justification and eternal life are to be expected. Nor can Mr. M. apply these texts to his external, graceless covenant, without perverting the word of God in a most shocking manner. Yea, if these texts do not

speak of the covenant of grace by which alone sinners are justified, no such covenant can be found in the bible. There was no other covenant revealed to Abraham; and Paul knew of no way of justification but this. We have as much evidence then that the covenant with Abraham was the covenant of grace, as we have that there ever was a covenant of grace existing since the world began.—Now observe,

1. From the nature of this covenant with Abraham we may learn the nature of GOD's visible church. For as a real compliance with this covenant renders us the children of Abraham indeed; so a visible compliance with it renders us visibly the children of Abraham. And as this covenant is but one, so GOD's church is but one; according to that article in the apostle's creed, so called, "I believe in the holy catholic church." There is but one good olive-tree, according to St. Paul. Rom. xi. Were there two covenants, there would be two churches, two olive-trees, answerable to the nature of the two covenants. But the bible knows of but one covenant with Abraham. And so God's church is compared to one good olive-tree. And graceless professors are compared to dry branches in this one good olive-tree. Whereas, on Mr. M.'s plan, the visible church is founded on a graceless covenant; this graceless covenant is the bond of union. So the olive-tree itself, root and branch, is dead and dry, wholly graceless; and appears to be so; for there is no pretence to any thing else. Yea, Mr. M. thinks it was God's design, that his real friends should keep hid, so as not to profess their friendship to him publicly before the world: and so that God should have, in this sense, no visible church in the world, p. 49. not one open friend upon earth. But Abraham professed to be a friend to God, and was by God publicly owned as such before the world; for he is called the friend of God. Jam. ii. 23.

2. We may also learn that the seal of the covenant of grace may with propriety be applied to some infants. For all will allow that God is the proper judge of propriety in such a case. And all grant that God appointed circumcision to be applied to some infants. And therefore, if baptism is a seal of the covenant of grace, yet it may be applied to some in-

fants; provided only they have the same right to baptism that the children of Abraham had to circumcision.

3. We may also hence learn the foundation of the right of believing Gentiles to baptism for their children. *For if we are Christ's, then are we Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* Gal. iii. 29. For, *if some of the branches be broken off, and thou being a wild olive, wert grafted in amongst them, that with them thou partakest of the root and fatness of the olive-tree.* Rom. xi. 17. But from the very time that the practice of grafting in Gentile converts into the good olive took place, it had also been the custom, by divine appointment, to put the seal of the covenant upon the children, as well as upon the father. Exod. xii. 48[d].

4. It is self-evident that those who know that they have no grace, cannot understandingly and honestly profess a compliance with the covenant of grace. But the covenant of grace is that covenant upon which God's visible church is founded. Nor is it lawful to apply the seals of this covenant to any other covenant, of a nature specifically different, devised by men.

5. For any church to lay aside the covenant of grace, and introduce a graceless covenant in its room, is so far forth to unchurch themselves: i. e. so far as this has influence, to render themselves not a visible church of Christ; but a society, visibly of a nature essentially different; as different as

d "If you consider the covenant of grace, which was made with Abraham, and by God's express command to be sealed to infants, you will there find a sufficient scripture institution for infant baptism. You will find this covenant in Gen. xvii. 2—10. Here we are taught as plainly as words can teach us, that this covenant was made with Abraham, as he was *the father of many nations*, the father of the Gentiles as well as the Jews; that this covenant was a covenant of grace, an everlasting covenant; that this covenant was to be sealed to infants. From all which it undoubtedly follows, that this covenant was made with us the seed of Abraham, as well as with the Jews; he was the father of believers in our nations as well as theirs." President Dickinson's Divine Right of Infant Baptism, p. 10. *Providence Edition.*

And this learned writer adds, p. 13. "That this covenant was a covenant of grace, is abundantly evident from the tenour of the covenant itself;" as he goes on to show. And, p. 16. "This then is the sum of the matter: Circumcision is a token or seal of the covenant of grace; Baptism is a token or seal of the covenant of grace: it therefore follows," &c. &c.

the covenants are. But it is time to attend to the grand objection against this doctrine, that the covenant with Abraham was the covenant of grace; taken, as Mr. M. says, "from the covenant itself." Other objections, of a more general nature, shall be obviated in Sect. VII. It may be thus summed up.

Obj. That the covenant with Abraham, mentioned Gen. 17. was not the covenant of grace, is evident not only from this, that he was in the covenant of grace before; but from the covenant itself, which was merely "an external mark in the flesh." For the circumcision of the flesh was the covenant: as it is written, *this is my covenant*. But circumcision is not the covenant of grace, but a mere external mark which may be put upon a man that has no grace. Nay, circumcision cannot be the covenant of grace, for by neglecting to circumcise a child, this covenant might be broken, but there is no falling from grace. Therefore circumcision is not the covenant of grace, but an external covenant of a very different nature. p. 5, 6, 7, 8 [e].

e The reasons which induce me to think that Mr. M. means as above, are these: 1. Because, speaking of the external covenant, in order to prove that it is not the covenant of grace, and to show the difference, he says, "that by which any one enters into this covenant, is an external mark in the flesh; viz. Circumcision; but that by which any one enters into the covenant of grace, is the circumcision of the heart." p. 7. By entering into covenant, he means complying with it. For this is his argument: viz. As in the circumcision of the heart, the covenant of grace is complied with; so in the circumcision of the flesh, the external covenant is complied with: therefore they are not one and the same covenant, but two, of a nature as different as these two kinds of circumcisions. 2. He says, p. 8. That circumcision was a compliance with the external covenant. These are his words: "This covenant appears to be an external covenant, in that although a person was in a state of grace, and was consequently included in the covenant of grace, yet this covenant remained to be complied with. Abraham was a true believer before, yet he must needs be circumcised." Which implies, that circumcision itself was a compliance with the external covenant. And on this hypothesis, he teaches, that baptism which comes in the room of circumcision, gives a right to all the blessings of the external covenant; makes us "Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." p. 12, 13. Even baptism alone, p. 16. 59. which it could not be supposed to do, were it not supposed to be the only condition of the blessings, i. e. the only thing required in the external covenant, necessary to give us a title to its blessings. So that we have beyond doubt Mr. M.'s true meaning in the objection above, however inconsistent it is with some other things in his book; of which hereafter, sect. viii.

Answ. This is the foundation of Mr. M.'s scheme. And perhaps there never was a fabric built on a more sandy foundation. For he has mistaken the external seal of the covenant for the covenant itself. Because it is said, *this is my covenant*, he at once concludes that circumcision is the very covenant itself. Just as the papists do in the doctrine of transubstantiation: because it is said, *this is my body*, they at once conclude that the bread is the very body of Christ itself. Whereas nothing can be plainer, than that the contents of God's covenant had been stated, and Abraham had complied with them, above 20 years before the institution of circumcision. And this very covenant, which had, from time to time, been renewed, is again renewed in Gen. xvii.; and an external seal is appointed to it. So that nothing hinders but that the covenant with Abraham may be what the Scriptures teach it to be, and what the Christian world have always thought it to be; viz. the covenant of grace: and circumcision may still be, what it has been always thought to be; viz. an external seal of the covenant of grace, which God made with Abraham[f]. And if God's

f And if circumcision was a seal of the covenant of grace, then every circumcised Israelite was under covenant bonds, in all things to comply with and live up to the covenant of grace, as administered under that dispensation. Particularly, he was under covenant bonds to separate himself and his household from the idolatrous world, and to love and worship the true God, and to believe in and wait for the promised Messiah, and to look for a better country, that is, an heavenly one. And he was under covenant bonds in these views, and with this temper, to circumcise his children, and bind them in all things to comply with and live up to the covenant of grace. And to neglect this was to be guilty of the breach of the Abrahamic covenant. And those who persisted in this neglect proved themselves to be not the genuine children of Abraham, but rather apostates from the God of their father: and as such they deserved to be cut off according to Gen. xvii. 14.; for Abraham acted sincerely and from the heart in complying with God's call to leave his native country, and in separating himself and his household from the idolatrous world, to worship and serve the true God, to believe in and wait for the promised Messiah, looking upon the land of Canaan as a type of heaven, which was indeed the country for which he sought. For this world was not his home. But he was a pilgrim and stranger on earth. And all the genuine children of Abraham are of the same spirit. For they *do the works of Abraham*. John viii. 39. All his seed therefore according to the flesh, by being circumcised on the eighth day, were bound by God to be of the same spirit. And when they became adult, and children were born to them, they were bound in the same spirit to cir-

covenant with Abraham was the covenant of grace, and if the same covenant which took place then, continues under the gospel dispensation, as Mr. M. asserts, p. 12. then the dispute is at end. Mr. M.'s scheme is demolished. However, because he means to gather strength from the Sinai covenant, let us proceed to consider that.

N. B. If the Abrahamic covenant was in no sense any part of the Sinai covenant, then circumcision was in no sense a seal of the Sinai covenant: and in this view the Sinai covenant ought to be entirely left out of the dispute. Be-

cumcise their children. If they neglected to circumcise their children in this spirit, they broke God's covenant. If they performed the external rite of circumcising their children, they did, by that action, practically profess to be of this spirit. For this was the import of the action. If their hearts were answerable to their external conduct, then they were Abraham's children indeed; and heirs, not only of earthly, but also of the heavenly Canaan. If they had no love to the God of Abraham, or faith in the promised Messiah, they were pagans at heart. Or in other words, they were uncircumcised in heart; and will be considered and treated accordingly, as soon as ever they shall come to stand before the bar of God, as searcher of hearts, in the invisible world. *For he is not a Jew, who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart. But if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.* Rom. ii. 25—29. However, in this present world, God conducted toward them not as the searcher of hearts, but in the character of a visible head; and therefore dealt with them according to visible appearances, trusting their profession, saying, *surely they are my people, children that will not lie.* And in this character he considered them as covenant-breakers, not according to what they were in heart secretly, but according to what they appeared to be in external conduct. These hints may serve to show the true import of Gen. xvii. 14. and the meaning of Exod. iv. 24, 25, 26.

There have been four dispensations of the covenant of grace; the Adamaic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, and the Christian. Repentance toward God, and faith in the promised seed, and holiness of heart and life, have been equally necessary in all times, and under all dispensations; but rites and ceremonies have been varied. Offering sacrifice was always practised from the days of Adam, but circumcision was appointed to the family of Abraham. Melchizedek and Lot were under the Adamaic dispensation, therefore they practised sacrificing, but not circumcision. But there never was a covenant made by God adapted to the temper and conduct of impenitent self-righteous sinners, requiring men to feel and act as they do, in their religious exercises and performances; but from the early days of Cain to the present period. God has ever refused to smell a sweet savour in such sacrifices. The first persecution and the first martyr was relative to this point. Gen. iv. 3—8.

cause we are all agreed, that the Gospel covenant is the same for substance with the Abrahamic: However, let us see what evidence there is that the Sinai covenant was a holy covenant, which could not be really complied with, but in the exercise of real holiness.

SECTION III.

The covenant with the Israelites in the wilderness was a holy covenant, and could not be really complied with, but in the exercise of real holiness.

THE whole law of Moses, which was written in a book, comprises at large all the contents of the covenant with the Israelites in the wilderness. This book, therefore, was called the book of the covenant. And the little chest in which it was put, from the special use to which it was appropriated, was called the Ark of the covenant. Deut. xxxi. 9. 25, 26. A brief summary of this law was written on two tables of stone. Deut. iv. 13. Which two tables of stone were, therefore, called the tables of the covenant, Deut. ix. 9, 10, 11. 15. and were also put into the Ark of the covenant. Deut. x. 4, 5. So that we may be as certain of the nature of that covenant, as we can be of the meaning of the Mosiac law.

The Israelites in the wilderness professed a compliance with this covenant, and with no other, as is beyond dispute certain from Exod. xix. 8. And chap. xxiv. 3. Deut. v. 1—6. And chap. xxvi. 16, 17, 18. Chap. xxviii. 1. 15. 58. And chap. xxix. 9—13. compared with chap. xxx. 10—16.

And as soon as they should pass over Jordan they were expressly commanded to set up great stones, and plaister them with plaister, and write upon them all the words of this law; and to build an altar, and offer sacrifice; and half the tribes were to stand on mount Ebal, and half on mount Gerizzim, and the Levites were to say unto all the men of Israel with a loud voice, *cursed be the man,* &c. that breaks this and that law, twelve times successively, according to the number

of the twelve tribes of Israel. And finally, to sum all in one word, *Cursed be the man that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them: and all the people shall say, Amen.* Deut. xxvii. And this most solemn and affecting affair was accordingly attended, soon after they had passed over Jordan. Josh. viii. 30—35.

So that, by their own act and deed, they did, in the most public and explicit manner, declare their hearty approbation of, and acquiescence in, not Mr. M.'s external covenant, but the perfect law of God, in all its strictness, and with all its curses, as holy, just, and good. Nor was there, according to that constitution, any hope of pardon in case of transgression, but by the blood of atonement. Nor was there any pardon to be obtained in this way until they repented, until their uncircumcised hearts were humbled, even so deeply humbled as to accept the punishment of their iniquity. Lev. xxvi. 40, 41. Neh. ix. Dan. ix. Then they were to pray for pardon, looking towards God's holy dwelling-place, where the covenant was laid up in the ark, and covered with a lid all made of pure gold, to keep the law in honour, which was a type of Christ, whose office it is to magnify the law, and make it honourable, and to open a way for grace to reign. That lid was called the mercy-seat, or rather as critics say, it ought to have been translated, the propitiatory; for it was a shadow of Christ the great propitiatory. And moreover, to complete the shadow, *without shedding of blood there was no remission.* Just thus stands the account in the sacred writings.

This cordial approbation of their law in all its extent, and with all its curses; and this praying for pardon, looking towards God's holy dwelling-place, offering sacrifices, &c. was for substance, the same with what the apostle Paul meant by *repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ,* which was the sum of that Gospel he used to preach to the Jew and also to the Greek. Acts xx. 21. For in repentance toward God, the divine law is heartily acquiesced in, and loved as holy, just, and good; and the whole blame of every transgression is taken to ourselves; with a disposition to say unto God, *thou art just when thou speakest, and clear*

when thou judgest. And in *faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ,* we look only to free grace through him for pardon and eternal life. So that the covenant of grace in a legal dress, was the very covenant into which they professed to enter. So Paul understood it; Rom. x. 6—10. compared with Deut. 30. 11—14.; of which more presently.

But a heart wholly dead in sin, is in a state of total contrariety to the divine law, and to the way of salvation through Jesus Christ; or in the language of Scripture, *is enmity against God, is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be.* So that there is not the least degree of real compliance with this holy covenant in one who is entirely destitute of holiness: and so no degree of real compliance can be understandingly and honestly professed. But if the truth was known, and the truth was spoken by graceless sinners, they would all as one man declare agreeable to our confession of faith, "we are utterly indisposed, disabled and apposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil;" for this is the very truth of the case; as Mr. M. himself professes to believe.

And where now is there the least appearance of Mr. M.'s external graceless covenant in the Old Testament? The contents of Abraham's covenant are justifying faith; *he believed in the Lord, and it was counted to him for righteousness,* and Gospel obedience; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And he was called the friend of God. James ii. 23. The contents of the covenant at Sinai, is the holy law of God as the rule of life, and the blood of atonement as the foundation of hope. And where is this unholy covenant? But to be more particular in the confutation of this notion:

1. It is readily granted, that a notion of the Sinai covenant, somewhat like this, was once espoused by the most respectable sect in the Jewish church: I mean the Pharisees. They understood the Mosaic law in this very sense, and in no other. And in this they were more consistent than Mr. Mather: for he understands the Mosaic law in this very sense, and in a sense diametrically opposite to it, at the same time; for he believes the Mosaic law requires perfect holiness, even that every law which was itself the rule

of duty in that covenant which was externally entered into; and yet he believes that the covenant externally entered into, did require no holiness at all; but might be really complied with in the sight of God, by a graceless man, dead in sin. But the Pharisees were more consistent[g]. They believed that the Sinai covenant required nothing more in religion than they performed. For, *as touching the righteousness of the law, they were blameless* in their own eyes. For they lived up to its demands in their sense of it. *All these things have I done from my youth up*, said one of them. And it was the spirit of the whole party to say to God, as the elder brother did to his father, *lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment.* Luke xv. For they were in their own eyes, *righteous men who needed no repentance.* And this encouraged them to pray to God, and to hope for his approbation; for they could say as he did, *God, I thank thee I am not as other men; for without the law sin was dead;* and so they were *alive without the law.* And in this view of themselves, they were bold to claim a covenant relation to God; *we have one father, even God.* And they gloried much in having *Abraham to their father;* and were vexed at John Baptist, and Jesus Christ, for not admitting their claims to be well-grounded; and for representing them to be not the children of Abraham, nor the children of God, but the *children of the devil, a generation of vipers.* This was shocking treatment, indeed, of those who were not only in covenant with God, as they thought; but who, as they understood it, had lived up to it too: and Mr. M. may be challenged to point out any essential difference between their notion of what the law of Moses required, and his notion of what his external covenant requires. For both agree in this, that a man may live up

g For the divine law to require contrary and inconsistent volitions, is to be a self-contradictory and inconsistent law. Mat. vi. 24. But sinful and holy volitions are contrary and inconsistent. John iii. 6. Rom. viii. 7. Gal. v. 17.

For God to make two laws, one requiring none but holy volitions, the other none but sinful volitions, is to make two laws, contradictory and inconsistent; both of which cannot be in force at the same time: yea, rather, neither of which can be in force at all, as they mutually destroy each other.

to the one, and to the other, without really embracing Christianity. They lived up to the law in their sense of it, and openly rejected Christ. And one may live up to Mr. M.'s external covenant and reject Christ in his heart, as he allows. And were it the fashion, he who rejects Christ in his heart, might do it in open profession[h]. Nay, how many professors are there, who, in their consciences, view the divine law very much in the same light that the Pharisees did? They are sensible it forbids open, gross, and, (what the world calls,) scandalous sins; such as stealing, &c. Their consciences will smite them if they are guilty of any such gross sins: but their consciences never smote them in their lives for not being converted for impenitence, for unbelief, for not loving God and Christ above all things, &c. &c. But they are agreed to a man to justify themselves in these sins, for they say, "we do as well as we can." And these are the men who claim church privileges with the greatest boldness, and have the highest notions of their being in covenant with God, and having a right to covenant blessings.

h In the dark days of popery there were no professed infidels among Christians. Since the reformation, light and knowledge are greatly increased, and infidelity is become very fashionable in Great-Britain. However, there are thousands of professed Christians yet remaining in the visible church, who believe the bible to be the word of God, not because they understand and believe that scheme of religion which in fact is contained in the bible; but because they think it contains their own schemes. Thus Pelagians believe the bible to be the word of God, as supposing it contains a system of Pelagianism; and Socinians, as supposing it contains a system of Socinianism; and Arminians, Neonomians, and Antinomians do the like; while they allow themselves to disbelieve, and hate, and oppose that very system of doctrines and practice which in fact it does contain. In this view there may be not a few professed Christians, who are infidels in reality; *i. e.* who really disbelieve that scheme of religion which is contained in the bible, while they profess to believe the bible to be the word of God. Thus it was among the Jews. John v. 46, 47. Matt. xxiii. 29—36. Should light still increase, and these men find out that their various schemes are not contained in the bible, if left to their own hearts, they would universally prefer infidelity to Christianity. And in this case there would be nothing to prevent their throwing off the profession of Christianity but their worldly interest. For it is plain fact, that the external evidences of Christianity, when fresh, and before the eyes of the Pharisees, were not sufficient to conquer their aversion to it, so as to prevent their rejecting of it. And human nature is the same that it was seventeen hundred years ago.

If it should ever happen to these men, that their consciences should be so awakened, as to see that a state and course of enmity against God and his law, and of rebellion against the Majesty of Heaven, is as great a sin, in the sight of the Holy One of Israel, as stealing, considered as a crime committed against our neighbour; their consciences would soon tell them, that the one disqualified them in the sight of God, for entering into covenant with God, as much as the other. But if we tell men, that a state and course of enmity against God and his law, and of rebellion against the Majesty of heaven does not, in the sight of God, disqualify them to enter into covenant with God, though stealing does, it will have, according to Mr. M.'s reasoning, p. 44. "a direct tendency to prevent their minds being impressed with a sense of the heinous nature of such sins, and of God's displeasure against them; but it is highly expedient they should be so dealt with, as to awaken in their minds a sense of the displeasure of God against their conduct."

2. Jesus Christ did not understand the law of Moses, which was the rule of duty in the Sinai covenant, in the same sense with the Pharisees, as requiring such a kind of obedience as they performed, and as other unconverted men may perform; but professedly undertook to give another explanation of it. This he did in his sermon on the Mount, which may be considered as a confutation of the Pharisaic scheme of religion. But a man may comply with Mr. M.'s external covenant fully, who has not the least degree of that religion taught in this sermon. A graceless man may live up to Mr. M.'s covenant, and at the same time be entirely destitute of a compliance with the law of Moses, in our Saviour's sense of it. For, says Christ, *he that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, shall be like a man that built his house upon a rock.* But a man may hear and do those things required in Mr. M.'s external covenant, and yet finally be like the man that *built his house upon the sand;* as he himself allows.

3. The law of Moses, which was the rule of duty in the covenant into which the Israelites entered, required nothing but holiness. That covenant, which was externally exhibit-

ed, and externally entered into, was so far from being altogether a graceless covenant, that it required nothing but true grace and real holiness; nothing but *love*, with all its various exercises and fruits, in heart and life; *love to God and man*: of this we are expressly assured by one who came from God, and infallibly understood the nature of that dispensation. Mat. xxii. 36—40. *Master, which is the great commandment in the law?* said a Pharisee to our Saviour, referring to the law of Moses. "Jesus said unto him, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind: this is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Thus he had answered the Pharisee's question. But he proceeded to add another sentiment, which effectually overthrew the Pharisaic scheme. *On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets*; for if the law obliged the Jew to perform every duty in a holy manner, out of love; and required no other kind of obedience but this; *if all the law and the prophets hung on these two commands*; so that radically love was all; so that this *holy love* was *the fulfilling of the law*, Rom. xiii. 8. 10. then the Pharisees, who were entirely destitute of this, were equally destitute of that kind of religion required in the Mosaic law, and so their scheme was completely overthrown [i].

i It is not only a fundamental maxim in the scripture scheme of religion, that *love is the fulfilling of the law*; but it is expressly affirmed, that without love the highest gifts and the greatest attainments, the most expensive deeds, and the most cruel sufferings, are nothing, and will profit nothing. The apostle Paul carries the point so far as to say, *though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, I am as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal*; as destitute of true and real virtue. *And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and have all knowledge: and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have no charity, I am nothing.* And to carry the point as high as it can possibly be carried, he adds, *and though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.* For in his view charity, or love, was the sum total of all virtue. And so there is no virtue in any knowledge, faith, or practice, any further than there is love in them; and where there is no love, these are all nothing. In a word, holiness in the creature is a conformity to God's moral perfections. The law is a transcript of God's moral character: God is love. The whole of what the law requires, is love with all its various exercises and

4. It is manifest, that Moses himself instructed the Israelites to understand the covenant in this sense, and that the blessings of it were promised, not to an ungracious, but to a holy obedience. Moses did instruct the Israelites to understand it in this sense, as requiring holiness, Deut. vi. 4, 5. *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.* Lev. xix. 18. *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* And as requiring nothing but holiness. Deut. x. 12. *And now Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul*—and that the blessings of it were promised to this holy obedience? This was one clause of the covenant, Exod. xx. 6. *Showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.* And thus it was afterwards explained. Deut. xi. 22. *For if ye will diligently keep all these commandments which I command you to do them, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him, then will the Lord drive out all these nations from before you,* &c. &c. And if any man will read the first eleven chapters of Deut. he will see with what plainness and fidelity Moses explained the covenant to the Israelites: or rather let the whole book be read through from beginning to end in this view.

5. The same kind of faith in God, as their conductor through the wilderness to the promised land, which was a type of the heavenly Canaan, was required of the whole congregation of Israel in their covenant, as is required of every believer, under the Gospel dispensation, in Christ Jesus, the captain of our salvation, on whom we depend to conduct us safe through this world to that rest that remains for the people of God: and this they professed, when they professed to take *Jehovah for their God.* And for the want of this faith their carcasses fell in the wilderness, just as false pro-

fruits. Therefore love is the sum of all virtue. Therefore, where there is no love there is no virtue: not the least degree of a real conformity to God's nature and law. Were this point understood and attended to, it would put an end to more than half the disputes in the Christian world.

fessors under the Gospel fall short of heaven through unbelief; as is plain from Num. xiv. and from the 3d and 4th chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews. And this, beyond all dispute, is a saving faith, a faith of a holy nature, and not the faith of devils.

6. Paul understood Moses to include the covenant of grace in his law. This is so plain, that any may see it, that will read and compare Rom. x. 6—10. with Deut. xxx. 11, 12, 13.

7. Peter also understood the holiness required in the Sinai covenant to be the same kind of holiness which the Gospel requires of true saints, and without which no man shall see the Lord; as is so evident, that none will fail to see it, that will read and compare 1 Pet. i. 15, 16. with Lev. xix. 2.

Thus it appears, that the covenant externally exhibited, and externally entered into, in the wilderness, was not a graceless, but a holy covenant.

Obj. "It will follow that perfect and sinless obedience was what they professed;" for "nothing short of perfection comes up to the demand of loving God with all the heart. Although therefore they entered into a covenant which required them to love God with all their heart; yet the profession which they then made, cannot consistently be understood as a profession, that at that time there was such an heart in them; but that such a heart was their duty, and intended as the object of their pursuit. But that an unrenewed sinner can, in no sense, be said to seek such an heart, is what to me wants proof." p. 22, 23.

Ans. Although the Israelites did not profess a perfect compliance with the law of perfection; yet they did profess a cordial compliance with it, even with the whole of it; but the unrenewed sinner can, in no Scripture sense, be said cordially to comply with it, in the least degree. But to be more particular:

1. In this objection Mr. M. grants one main point for which we contend, viz. that the law, which was the rule of duty in the Sinai covenant, required perfect holiness. He must therefore acknowledge, that it forbid every sin, the least as well as the greatest: and that it therefore required

nothing but holiness. And that therefore his unholy graceless covenant was not required by it, or contained in it.

2. It will on the other hand be readily granted by us, that the law of God, (considered as requiring perfect holiness, and forbidding every sin, the least as well as the greatest,) is the rule of life to believers; and as such, is presupposed and implied in the covenant of grace, which is not designed to make void, but to establish the law. Rom. iii. 31. And therefore, whenever the covenant of grace is complied with in the exercise of faith, the law in the very act is cordially received as a rule of life by the believer: even as Abraham received that divine injunction, *walk before me and be thou perfect,* in the very act of his renewing covenant with God. Gen. xvii. But I have endeavoured already to explain and prove this at large in an essay on the nature and glory of the Gospel.

3. None can consistently pretend, that Moses intended to lead the Israelites to profess sinless perfection in that covenant; because the daily sacrifice of a lamb, the great type of the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world, which was to be offered, morning and evening continually, as well as a great variety of other sacrifices of atonement, were essential parts of the Sinai covenant. But these had been needless institutions, had perfect holiness been professedly expected. For it was professedly expected that they would keep covenant. For they were taken into covenant in that view. Isa. lxiii. 8. *For he said, surely they are my people, children that will not lie.*

4. And yet no fact can be plainer than that Moses led them to receive the whole law for the rule of their lives, and that they professed to do this. Exod. xxiv. 3. *And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, all the words which the Lord hath said, will we do.* Compared with Deut. xxvi. 17. *Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice.* For they professed, not merely to give the assent of their understandings to this truth, viz.

that the law of God ought to be the rule of their lives; but, to use the modern phrase, they professed the consent of their wills. "All the words which the Lord hath spoken, will we do." And God declares that this was "well said." And had there been "such an heart in them," answerable to their visible profession, they would have been Israelites indeed: for their hearts would then have been right in the sight of God, and they would have been steadfast in his covenant. Num. xxxii. 11, 12. Their profession therefore was full enough, but they lied to God with their tongues. Their profession was as full as God desired: but there was not such an heart in them. Ps. lxxviii. 36, 37. For,

5. It is the peculiar character of the regenerate cordially to receive the divine law as the rule of their lives. Heb. viii. 10. But it is the universal character of the unregenerate to be in a state of total contrariety to the divine law in their hearts. Rom. viii. 7. *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be.* Therefore,

6. As every true believer does cordially receive the law of God for the rule of his life, so he may understandingly and honestly profess it: but one whose heart is in a state of total contrariety to the divine law, if he understands and honestly speaks the truth, must say, "I am not subject to the divine law, neither indeed can I be; yea, so far from it, that I am at enmity against God." But,

7. None of the religious seekings and endeavours of one, in whom a total non-compliance with God's holy covenant takes place, are of the nature of a compliance with that covenant, in the least degree; as is self-evident. Therefore,

8. There is no way left for a profession of a compliance with God's holy covenant, to those who know themselves to be unconverted, (without lying,) but to deny the doctrine of total depravity. For since the covenant cannot be proved to be an unholy graceless one, we must pretend that graceless sinners have some grace, in order to obtain our end. But,

9. If unconverted sinners have that grace, which is a compliance with the covenant of grace, then they are entitled

to the blessings of the covenant of grace, to pardon, justification, and eternal life; to say which, is at once to set aside the whole New Testament. Thus stands the case.

Now what method Mr. M. will take to get along with his scheme, after time for reconsideration, is not yet known: or whether a gentleman of so much good sense will not rather give it up.

Objec. But if these things are true, it will follow, that the covenant with Abraham, the Sinai covenant, and the Gospel covenant, are for substance one and the same covenant; even the covenant of grace: but this does not agree with many Scripture texts. For the apostle Paul distinguishes between the Abrahamic covenant and the Sinai covenant, between the *promise to Abraham* and *the law which was 430 years after*, and calls them *two covenants*. Gal. 3. 16, 17, 18. and Chap. 4. 24. And he represents the Sinai covenant, which he calls the law as requiring perfect obedience on pain of the curse. Chap. iii. 10. And affirms that by the *deeds of the law no flesh can be justified*. Rom iii. 20. Gal. ii. 16. And that Abraham was *not justified by the law, but by faith*. Gal. iii. 6, 7, 8, 9. And that the *law is not of faith*, ver. 12. but a *school-master to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith*. Ver. 24. Moreover, it is plainly intimated, that in the Sinai covenant God did not communicate sanctifying grace to those that were under it; but that in the Gospel covenant he does. At Mount Sinai God *wrote the law on tables of stone*, and obliged the people to keep it; but did not give them a heart to do so: but in the new covenant God *writes his law on the heart*, i. e. by the influences of his Spirit, gives a disposition of mind answerable to the law. Heb. viii. 8. 12. Therefore Paul calls the Sinai covenant the *ministration of death* and *condemnation*, and the *letter* that *killeth*, in distinction from the Gospel, which he calls the *spirit* which *giveth life*, the *ministration of the spirit*, and the *ministration of righteousness*. 2 Cor. iii. 6, 7, 8.

Ans. As Mr. M. maintains that the Abrahamic, the Sinai, and the Gospel covenants, are for substance one and the same covenant; so the foregoing objection cannot consistently

be made by him or by his admirers; nor has he taken any notice of it. It may suffice therefore to say,

1. That every self-righteous Jew was disposed to consider the Old Testament as a covenant of works, and every self-righteous Christian is disposed to consider the New Testament in the same light. They attended the externals of that dispensation, and expected to find acceptance with God, by what they did. Luke xviii. 11. Rom. ix. 31. 32. And their example is closely followed by too many under the Christian dispensation: neither of them understanding the true nature of the divine law. Rom. vii. 8, 9.

2. It is readily granted, that St. Paul taught that all self-righteous sinners, be they Jews or Christians, are under a law which requires perfect obedience on pain of eternal damnation: that this law is holy, just, and good; that they are in duty bound to fulfil this law themselves; that God is not bound to give them any assistance at all; and that it curses every one that continueth not in all things. And it is readily granted, that this law is a ministration of death and condemnation, and killeth. It was *ordained to life*, i. e. it promises life to every one that lives up to it; but it is *found to be unto death* to every one who makes the attempt. Rom. vii. 10.

3. It is readily granted, that this law is as different from the Abrahamic covenant, and the Gospel covenant, as the covenant of works is from the covenant of grace: and that it was the design of the apostle to set this difference in a clear and striking light, that he might kill all the self-righteous hopes of the self-righteous sinner; and convince him that there is no hope in his case, but of mere free grace through Jesus Christ. Gal. iii. 10. 24. Rom. iii. 9. 25.

4. It is also granted, that this law was one principal part of the Sinai covenant; and that every carnal Jew was under it, and held bound by it. Yea, that it is the peculiar privilege of the true believer to be delivered from it; and that by being united to and interested in Christ Jesus, the second Adam, who hath completely answered its demands; Rom. vi. 14. and chap. vii. 4, 5, 6. Gal. ii. 19, 20. and chap. iii. 10. 14. And to grant these things, is to grant all that the apostle says

about this law. And yet consistently with all these things it may be asserted, that,

5. The Mosaic dispensation did reveal a way in which pardon of sin might be obtained: it did exhibit in types a shadow of the Gospel-way of obtaining pardon. See the 4th, 5th, 6th, and 16th chapters of Leviticus. And it did promise pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace to the penitent believer. Lev. xxvi. 40, 41, 42. Deut. xxx. 1—6. And the land of Canaan was a designed type of heaven; and long life and prosperity there, of eternal life and blessedness above. Heb. iv. 1—11. But this is the sum of what is intended, when the Sinai covenant is represented as a covenant of grace.

6. The Israelites, when they entered into covenant at Mount Sinai in words, did by their unbelief reject the covenant of grace in their hearts. Psalm lxxviii. 36, 37. Heb. iii. 19. And therefore, notwithstanding they were then visibly married to God in a covenant containing the promises before mentioned, whereby they laid themselves under bonds to keep covenant; yet God was not obliged to give them a heart to keep covenant, by any promise contained in that dispensation, as he would have been had they been sincere, and as he is to all who are united to Christ by a true and living faith. And so it came to pass that they broke covenant, in an open, public manner; and *he regarded them not*, but their carcasses fell in the wilderness. Whereas God *writes his law in the heart* of the true believer, and effectually inclines him to walk in his ways. And thus every false professor, whether Jew or Christian, will fall short of the heavenly Canaan; as it is written, John xv. 2. *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit.*—But,

7. If any, after all, shall insist that the Sinai covenant was merely a covenant of works, and that the Abrahamic covenant was not in any sense contained in it, they ought to consider, that if this be so, then the Sinai covenant ought to be entirely left out of the account in the present dispute, and circumcision ought to be considered as being in no sense a

seal of it. For it was appointed to be a seal of the Abrahamic covenant, and of no other; and therefore if the Abrahamic covenant was in no sense a part of the Sinai covenant, then circumcision was in no sense a seal of the Sinai covenant. For no new seals to the covenant of works have been appointed since Adam was turned out of paradise. And as for Mr. M.'s external graceless covenant, it never had any existence.[1] The bible knows nothing about it, either name or thing. We have already seen that it is not contained in the Old Testament, and we shall presently perceive that it is not to be found in the New.

SECTION IV.

The Gospel of Christ essentially different from Mr. Mather's external graceless covenant.

IT is true, the Gospel consists in an external revelation; but then the thing revealed, is the way of salvation by free grace through Jesus Christ. It is also true, that the call of the Gospel is an external call; but then the thing it calls us unto, is a belief and compliance with the way of salvation by free grace through Jesus Christ. The Gospel consists in the clearest and fullest external revelation of the way in which GOD may be just, and yet justify and save sinners; which way of salvation it constantly invites sinners to comply with, that they may be pardoned and saved; saying, *come, for all things are now ready.* Mat. xxii. 4. This may be called an external covenant, as it is a visible exhibition of the covenant of grace, with which professors of Christianity visibly comply in a profession of repentance toward GOD, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. But in this view it is essentially different from Mr. M.'s external covenant. For the Gospel covenant promises pardon and eternal life to those who really comply with it; but one may comply with Mr. M.'s external covenant in sincerity and truth, and yet have no grace, and finally perish. For Mr. M.'s external covenant does not require saving grace, and may be perfectly complied with by one who is

dead in sin. For it is an unholy, graceless covenant; and so it is essentially different from the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

John Baptist did not baptise with the baptism of the external covenant, but with the *baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.* Luke iii.

Jesus Christ did not call men to comply with an external graceless covenant, and be baptised; but to *repent and believe the Gospel.* Mat. i. 15. Having counted the cost, to deny themselves, take up their cross and follow him. Luke xiv. 25—33. Promising eternal life to those who did so. Mat. xix. 29. Representing graceless professors by *salt that has lost its savour, and is good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot.* Mat. v. 13. Luke xiv. 34, 35. He warned his hearers against professing, and not living up to his religion, as an inconsistent conduct. Luke vi. 46. He called them to make such a profession as he might own to their honour in the heavenly world, before his Father. Mat. x. 32. *Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.* This is that profession unto which he invited men, and never invited them to any other. Rather to false professors Christ declares it will be said, *Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment?* Mat. xxii.

The apostles had no commission to preach and baptise upon Mr. M.'s external covenant; but were expressly ordered to *preach the Gospel to every creature;* a Gospel that promised eternal life: and to baptise those who appeared to comply with it. Mark xvi. 15, 16. They were sent to make disciples, not to Mr. M.'s external covenant, but to Christianity. Mat. xxviii. 19, 20. In a word, they were sent to *preach repentance and remission of sins to all nations in the name of Christ.* Luke xxiv. 47. And they acted up to their commission.

When the three thousand were pricked in their heart, Peter did not tell them to comply with Mr. M.'s external covenant and be baptised, which they might have done, and yet have continued impenitent and unpardoned; but exactly according to his master's orders, he said, *repent and be bap-*

tised in the name of the Lord Jesus for the remission of sins. Acts ii. 37, 38. Repent first, and then be baptised.

And when Peter went to preach to Cornelius, it was not to preach up an external covenant, with which a man may comply and yet perish; but to declare to him the Gospel-way of salvation, to *tell him words whereby he might be saved, and all his house.* Acts xi. 14. And accordingly he preached the Gospel, viz. *that through Christ's name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.* Acts x. 43. But he said not one word about Mr. M.'s external graceless covenant. And when the church at Jerusalem heard what had happened, they glorified God, not that the Gentiles were admitted into an external graceless covenant, a thing not heard of in the apostolic age; but they glorified God, saying, *then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.* Acts xi. 18. For it had been their notion, that an uncircumcised Gentile could not be saved. Acts xv. 1.

Peter, before he began his sermon, was well assured that Cornelius was a real saint; for Cornelius had known so much about the Jewish religion, that although born a Pagan, yet he had renounced idolatry, and had become a true and acceptable worshipper of the God of Israel. He was a believer in the same sense that Nathanael was, who was an Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile, and who, however, did not at that time know that Jesus was the Messiah who was to come. John i. 43—47. For without faith it is impossible to please God. Heb. xi. 6. But Cornelius obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts, by an angel from heaven, which appeared to him. Acts x. 4. And by a vision which appeared to Peter, and a voice declaring Cornelius, though uncircumcised, yet in the sight of God to be not unclean, but clean; for that God himself had cleansed him; ver. 9—16. Peter therefore began his sermon with a declaration, that Cornelius, although uncircumcised, was nevertheless in a state of acceptance with God; ver. 34, 35. It had been mad work therefore for Peter to have preached up Mr. M.'s external graceless covenant to one who was already really in the covenant of grace, and whom Peter had just declared to be so. But Peter, far from this,

knowing his business well, gave to him and to the whole company a brief narrative of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; exhibiting the evidence there was, that he was indeed the promised Messiah, and that *through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive the remission of sins.* Ver. 36—43. And it happened to the hearers, while he was preaching, as Christ said it would to them that believe, even in the very commission which he gave to his apostles. (Mark xvi. 15, 16.) *The Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word:* and that not only in his extraordinary gifts, but also in his sanctifying influences, and that to a great degree; for they not only "spake with tongues," but "MAGNIFIED GOD;" as the blessed Virgin did, when filled with the Holy Ghost, Luke i. 46. Or rather, as those who, on the day of pentecost, spake the wonderful works of God. Acts ii. 11. This appearance struck Peter and all the saints present with astonishment. *Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptised which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?* said Peter. And exactly in this point of light did Peter afterwards set this fact, when he gave a narrative of it to the council at Jerusalem. Acts xv. 8, 9. *And God which knoweth the hearts, beareth them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us, and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.* And again,

When Paul had the awakened jailor to instruct, and to prepare for baptism, he said not one word to him about Mr. M.'s external covenant, either name or thing; but preached the gospel to him, saying, *believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.* Acts xvi. 30, 31. And thou shall be "saved." He did not preach up a graceless faith, the faith of devils; but a saving faith. To that, and to no other, did he exhort the jailor, in order to prepare him for baptism [k].

k It is not looked upon among men, ingenuous, fair, and honest, to lead any to sign and seal a bond before we let them know the contents of it. But the apostles led their converts to set their seal in baptism, without saying one word to them about Mr. M.'s external covenant, name, or thing. This, there-

When Mr. Sandeman says, that "a simple belief of the simple truth," (the *heart* left out of the account,) is saving faith; Mr. M. will doubtless agree with me in saying, "this cannot be saving faith; because the devil has it." When therefore Mr. Mather, (p. 25.) represents the eunuch, as entering into covenant with God, by the simple belief of the simple truth, by an ungracious, unholy faith, and is resolved to make that phrase, "with all thine heart," stand for nothing; I beg leave to reply, "this faith cannot bring those into covenant with God that have it; because the devil has it." And I humbly conceive that no man need be at a loss about the meaning of Philip's words, or of the eunuch's answer, that will compare them with Rom. x. 9. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, THOU SHALT BE SAVED." And with 1 John iv. 15. "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." And chap. v. 1. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." For just this was the profession which Philip demanded, and which the eunuch made.

And in this view of things, it is easy to discern the true reason why the apostolic churches were, in the epistles wrote to them, considered and treated as saints by the writers, who it is not to be supposed had any personal acquaintance at all with many of them; and why they were spoken of as *beloved of God.* Rom. i. 7. *Sanctified in Christ Jesus.* 1 Cor. i. 2. *Chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.* Eph. i. 4, &c. &c. For such they were by profession before all the world; and such, generally speaking, they proved themselves to be by their practice. Indeed, it was always expected, that tares would, more or less, be among the wheat. But the apostles did not think it their duty to sow tares knowingly and on design. In that age of the church this was thought to be the work of the devil. Mat. xiii. 39. And methinks he may now, in our age, do enough at it,

fore, was not the covenant which they led them to seal. Nay, the apostles themselves do not appear to have known that there was any such covenant to be preached up by them, or to be sealed by their converts.

without any help from the clergy. And if professors in that age lived up to their profession, and gave abundant evidence of their sincerity, by the holiness of their lives, as Mr. M. observes they did, p. 31, &c. then they were indeed *the salt of the earth, and the light of the world,* in their profession and in their practice too, as all church-members ought to be. Mat. v. 13, 14, 15. Nor did the apostles think it a thing of dangerous tendency to treat them as such in the most public manner, in the sight of the world; as Mr. M. must have thought on his scheme, p. 51, &c. These were churches of visible saints, who appeared to be the *body of Christ, a living body to a living head.* p. 48, 49. And not *synagogues of satan,* to which graceless professors are said to belong, in Rev. ii. 9. To conclude,

When we read the life of John Baptist, and of Jesus Christ; when we read the commission given to the apostles, in Matthew, Mark, and Luke; and when we read the history of their conduct in the Acts, and consider how they treated the churches which they set up, nothing can be plainer, than that they preached the Gospel, made proselytes to Christianity, set up Christian churches on the Gospel plan; and not on the plan of an external graceless covenant, a thing not heard of in that age.

Obj. But there was not time to examine the three thousand on the day of pentecost, in order to form a judgment of their gracious state: nor to judge of them by their fruits. p. 26.

Ans. They professed to comply with Peter's exhortation, *repent and be baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus for the remission of sins.* Their profession, circumstanced as it was, was to all appearance sincere. And this was enough; for the doctrine of the necessity of an infallible certainty, that professors were what they professed themselves to be, in order to their admission into the church, was not an apostolic doctrine. And besides, they had as much time to examine into their grace, as into their moral sincerity.

Obj. "How could the character of the apostles be maintained as infallibly inspired guides to the church, when those

they had received did so often prove hypocrites, false brethren, and apostates?" p. 29.

ANS. By infallible inspiration they were taught, that it was God's prerogative to search the heart. They never pretended to do it themselves. They preached repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Their converts professed that repentance and faith which they preached. They received them upon their profession; they expected there would be tares among the wheat. But they did not mean to sow tares knowingly and upon design: this was the work of the devil; and is it not fit that the ministers of Christ should take the work of the devil out of his hands?

OBJ. It is true, Peter said of Cornelius and those that were with him, *God put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.* But he said this some years after, in which time they had doubtless given sufficient evidence: but this is of no weight to prove that they were admitted to baptism on that supposition. p. 28.

ANS. If he did say this some years after, and if they had in that time given ever so great evidence of the sincerity of their conversion; yet Peter says not one word about this consequent evidence, nor gives the least hint that they had given such evidence. He mentions not one single fact on which his charity for them was founded, but that only which happened before they were baptised, viz. *giving them the Holy Ghost even as he did unto us.* But the apostles received not only the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost on the day of pentecost, but also large effusions of his sanctifying influences, filling their hearts with love to divine things. And out of the abundance of their hearts, their mouths spake of *the wonderful works of God.* Acts ii. 11. And it happened to Cornelius and his household just as it had to the apostles on the day of pentecost, and their hearts were filled with divine love; and out of the abundance of their hearts their mouth spake, MAGNIFYING GOD, extolling and praising him for the glorious display of his perfections in the work of redemption by Jesus Christ. Acts x. 46. By which Peter and the saints who were with him perceived, to their full satisfaction, that these Gentile converts had the

same holy views, and holy affections, which they themselves had; which led Peter to say, *God bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.* This is the plain and natural sense.

SECTION V.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper, are seals of the covenant of grace, and of no other covenant.

MR. Mather says, p. 36, "Seals are rites of confirmation. Nothing is confirmed by the seal, but what is expressed in the written instrument to which it is annexed. And thus, God confirms and ratifies nothing by the sacraments, but what is contained in the declarations of his word." And p. 37. "These seals, with respect to us, confirm the profession which we make, and the engagements we come under." So that if the "written instrument," is the covenant of grace, God, by affixing his seal, ratifies his promise to save those that comply with it; and this, on God's part, is the import of the action of sealing. And, if the "written instrument" is the covenant of grace; the professor, by actively receiving the seal, declares, on his part, that he does comply with that covenant, and ratifies his engagements to live up to it. For, thus it is in all mutual covenants among men, where both parties seal, they do by sealing declare a present compliance with the bargain, and mutually oblige themselves to act up to it for the future. To the bargain, I say, as contained in the written instrument; to that, and to nothing else. So that when once it is determined what is contained in the written instrument, it is at the same time determined, what is sealed and what is the import of the act of sealing. But Mr. M. says, "the sealing ordinances, by which the external covenant is sealed and confirmed, do equally seal and confirm the covenant of grace." p. 36. Upon which it may be observed that, to be consistent, it will follow,

1. That when a graceless man seals the external graceless covenant, binding himself to perform all the graceless duties which it requires; he does at the same time equally seal the covenant of grace, and equally bind himself to perform all the gracious duties which this requires. And whereas these two covenants require religious exercises of a contrary nature, even as contrary as graceless and gracious, which, in other words, are as contrary as sin and holiness; so Mr. M.'s unconverted covenanter, in the act of sealing these two contrary covenants, binds himself to perform all religious duties in these two contrary manners; and that at the same time; for he binds himself by sealing both covenants at once, to perform every duty as both covenants require, from day to day, as long as he lives; and every time he comes to the Lord's table, he binds himself afresh. But our Saviour says, *No man can serve two masters.* Besides, on this plan, the door of the visible church is shut against all who know themselves to be graceless. For they cannot make a profession of a compliance with the covenant of grace; and so the end and design of Mr. M.'s whole scheme is frustrated.

2. It will also follow from Mr. M.'s own words, that when a godly man, Abraham, for instance, sealed the external covenant and the covenant of grace, both at once, he equally bound himself through life to perform all religious duties, both in a gracious and ungracious manner, at the same time. But how could Abraham, at the same time, serve these two contrary masters, requiring things as contrary as sin and holiness? Or how could he, being a godly man, with a good conscience, bind himself by covenant to perform all religious duties in an unholy manner? Surely he could not do it! and so on Mr. M.'s plan the door of the visible church is shut against both the godly and the wicked. The godly cannot come to sacraments, because they are seals of an unholy covenant, binding them to live in a course of unholy duties; and the ungodly, knowing themselves to be such, cannot come, because they are seals of a holy covenant, binding them to live in a course of holy duties[l]. Therefore,

l Mr. M. thinks, that there "was a manifest propriety in choosing Abraham, a man of eminent holiness," to be the head of this graceless covenant, p. 9.—But

3. Mr. M. must give up the common notion of a seal, as declaring a present compliance with, and binding both parties to act up to, what is contained in the written instrument, or else he must honestly leave the covenant of grace out of the written instrument, or he must give up his scheme as wholly inconsistent. To solve this difficulty he says, "in their primary reference they may be seals of the external covenant; and yet, consistently in their ultimate reference, may be seals of the covenant of grace." p. 36.—But if they in fact really seal both covenants, then the man who comes to the sacraments, does in fact really bind himself to fulfil both covenants. For, let him ask any lawyer on the continent, and he will be told that by sealing a "written instrument," if it contains two or ten covenants, we oblige ourselves either to fulfil all of them, or none of them. The truth is, Mr. M. had proposed this objection against his scheme, viz. "The preceding discourse represents the sealing ordinances of the Gospel, not as seals of the covenant of grace, but of the external covenant with the visible church." And he had no way to get rid of it, according to his scheme, but to run into these inconsistencies, or roundly to deny the received doctrine of the Christian church, that baptism and the Lord's supper are seals of the covenant of grace. He has denied it implicitly: but he did not choose to deny it expressly; but seems to own it; and so runs himself into these inconsistencies.

But if we turn our eyes off from Mr. M.'s inconsistent scheme, to the New Testament, which was designedly adapted to the capacities of common people, we shall see not the least appearance of two covenants, of which baptism and the Lord's supper are the appointed seals; we shall find no covenant but the covenant of grace; no Gospel, but the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which promises pardon and eternal salvation to the penitent believer; and baptism and the Lord's supper are

I am of our Saviour's mind, Matt. xii. 33. *Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt.* Let holy Abraham be at the head of a holy covenant; but let some graceless professor be at the head of Mr. M.'s external graceless covenant. For it was contrary to the Jewish law *to yoke an ox and an ass together.* And, saith the apostle Paul, *What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?*

represented as seals to no other covenant but this.—For, to use Mr. M.'s phrase,

In the "written instrument" GOD promises salvation to the true believer. Mark xvi. 16. Therefore, *if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest* be active in receiving the seal of the covenant, said Philip, divinely inspired. Acts viii. 37.

Again. In the "written instrument" GOD promises remission of sins to the true penitent through Jesus Christ, Luke xxiv. 47. Therefore, *repent and be baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus for the remission of sins,* Acts ii. 38. (that is, comply with the covenant, and then be active in receiving the seal;) was the language of a divinely inspired apostle.—And another divinely inspired minister of Christ, already knowing the man to be a true penitent, and so prepared to be active in receiving the seal of the covenant, said, *arise, and be baptised, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.* Acts xxii. 16.—Thus we see what covenant is ratified and confirmed by this seal, on GOD's part.

And because the apostolic professors, in offering themselves to baptism, and in being active in receiving the seal of the covenant, did on their part thereby bind themselves to live according to all things contained in it, therefore Paul said, Gal. iii. 27. *As many of you as have been baptised into Christ, have put on Christ*; not *put on the external covenant;* but *put on Christ,* i. e. put on Christianity; so as to be entitled to the heavenly Canaan, granting their hearts to answer to their external conduct; for he adds, ver. 29. *And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to promise.* Heirs to what? To all the blessings of the covenant; particularly to the heavenly Canaan, of which the earthly Canaan was a type, and which Paul had just said, was given to Abraham by promise, ver. 18.

And because in baptism, in the apostolic age, men professed a cordial compliance with the covenant of grace, and bound themselves in all things to be affected and act accordingly; therefore, when it was objected that Paul's doctrine of justification by faith without works, tended to make men licentious, and to encourage them to live in sin, that grace

might abound; he thought it sufficient to say, "this can never be, for we have been baptised, and so we are dead to sin and alive to God." "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid: how shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ, were baptised into his death? therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life; for if we have been *in baptism* planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.—For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under law, but under grace." Rom. vi. 1—14. Which proves, that in baptism they professed a compliance with Christianity itself, and not with Mr. M.'s external graceless covenant, with which a man may comply, while under the dominion of sin.

And indeed, for men to come to the apostles to be baptised *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,* could consistently mean nothing less than a public practical declaration of a present compliance with what the Gospel reveals concerning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and an engagement to act accordingly in all future time; in which the whole of Christianity consists. To believe what the Gospel reveals concerning the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and to receive God for our Father, and Christ for our mediator, and the Holy Ghost for our enlightener and sanctifier; and to be affected and act accordingly, is the whole of Christianity. But to be active in offering ourselves to be baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and in the very act to refuse in our hearts, and in the sight of God, to have God for our Father, or Christ for our Saviour, or the Holy Ghost for our sanctifier, is to contradict ourselves in the sight of God. It is to lie to the Holy Ghost. It is to renounce Christianity in heart, at the very moment when we embrace it in our visible conduct. But such wicked dissimulation is not an appointed means of grace.

As to the Lord's supper, our Saviour teacheth us, that it is the seal of the new covenant, in which remission of sins is offered through the blood of Christ. Mat. xxvi. 28. *For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins.* Which is essentially different from Mr. M.'s external covenant, by which no remission of sins can be obtained.

At the Lord's table, Christ, by the mouth of his minister, says, *this is my body, take ye, eat ye all of it. This is my blood, take ye, drink ye all of it.* Hereby sealing to the truth contained in the "written instrument." But it is therein written in so many words, "I am the living bread, which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give him is my flesh, which I give for the life of the world. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." John vi. 51. 56. Thus it is written, and thus it is sealed on Christ's part. On the other hand the communicant, by his practice, declares, "I take his flesh, and eat it. I take his blood, and drink it," and seals the covenant on his part; and thus the "written instrument" is externally and visibly sealed, ratified, and confirmed on both sides, with as much formality as any "written instrument" is mutually sealed by the parties in any covenant among men. And now if both parties are sincere in the covenant thus sealed; and if both abide by and act according to it, the communicant will be saved. For salvation is promised in the "written instrument" to those who *eat his flesh and drink his blood.* John vi. 51. This promise is sealed by Christ at the Lord's table. The condition of it is externally complied with, in the sacramental actions, by the communicant, who visibly *eats his flesh and drinks his blood.* And if the exercises of his heart answer to his external actions, the covenant is on his part complied with, sealed, ratified, and confirmed. And if the Gospel is true, he will be saved.

But if the communicant's heart does not answer to his external sacramental actions; but on the contrary, if when he visibly and sacramentally *eats his flesh and drinks his blood,* even at that very time, in his heart and in the sight of God,

he rejects his flesh and his blood, his atonement, and all the blessings purchased by his death, his visible actions are a lie: and lying is not a converting ordinance.

An impenitent sinner under legal terrors may forsake bad company, lay aside the practice of uncleanness, of drunkenness, of backbiting, of lying and cheating, &c. he may make restitution to those whom he has injured in name and estate: he may spend much time in hearing and reading the word of God, in meditating on death and judgment, heaven and hell, in comparing his thoughts, words, and actions, with the law of God, and with the gospel of Christ: and he may spend much time in secret prayer, and in trying to get his heart deeply affected with eternal things, &c. &c. without lying. And thus reforming his life, and attending these means, may be useful to promote a conviction of his sinful, guilty, helpless, ruined state: But lying tends to sear his conscience and hearden his heart in sin. To make a profession of a compliance with the covenant of grace with his mouth, when he knows he does not comply with it in his heart; and to renew this covenant at the table of the Lord in visible actions, while he continues to reject it in his heart, and knows this to be the case with him, is wilful lying, and tends directly to the eternal ruin of the sinner's immortal soul.

Object. By my sacramental actions I mean to acknowledge, that the gospel is true; but not to profess a compliance with it. p. 41.

Answ. Should your neighbour treat you thus, in any covenant depending between you; should he say, "I own the things contained in it are true, but I do not mean to bind myself to fulfil the covenant, by signing and sealing it before evidence;" you, and all the world, would look upon him as a dishonest quibbler.

Obj. But I mean to have the truth of the Gospel deeply impressed upon my heart by the ordinance." p. 41.

Answ. This end might be as well obtained, if you tarried as a spectator. Those who stand by as witnesses, when a bond is signed and sealed, may know what is done, as well as those who are parties, and who bind themselves. Men that mean not to bind themselves should not sign and seal the

bond. No one seals a bond, unless he means to bind himself to fulfil it. Should a man offer to sign and seal a bond, which he did not mean to bind himself to fulfil, in order to get his heart affected with what is contained in it, his neighbours would think him delirious.

OBJ. But I mean to bind myself to "endeavour" to fulfil it; i. e. to "endeavour to conform my practice to the rules of it." p. 21.

ANS. Should you offer your house and farm to your neighbour upon the most reasonable terms, which if he had a heart he might fulfil with ease and pleasure, Mat. xi. 28, 29. Prov. iii. 17.; and should he plainly tell you, that at present he could not find it in his heart to comply with your offer; nor could he promise that he ever should comply; but however he was willing to bind himself to "endeavour" to comply, and no more; you would doubtless think best to put off the bargain till you should find him of another temper. And what our Saviour thinks best in the present case, is most plainly expressed in Luke xiv. 25—33.

SECTION VI.

It cannot be determined what Mr. M.'s external covenant requires, and wherein a real compliance with it doth consist, so that any man can ever know that he has complied with it.

NEGATIVELY, Mr. M. has determined with great exactness, what it does not require, and what is not necessary in order to a perfect compliance with it: viz. holiness. For it requires no holiness at all: no, not the least spark of true grace. So that, if we could know what it did require, it might be perfectly complied with by one who is quite dead in sin. This is very plain.

Positively he has not determined what it does require, so that any man can ever know that he has complied with it; nor can it be determined by him, or by any other. For it

cannot be determined from scripture, for the scripture knows nothing about such a covenant, either name or thing. And it cannot be determined from reason; for it is supposed to be a matter of pure revelation.

Indeed, Mr. M. has attempted to settle this matter: he says, p. 21. "I will allow, that none but such as profess the Christian religion, and will endeavour to conform his practice to the rules of it, ought to be admitted into the church." Upon which it may be observed,

1. That Abraham made no profession at all of any faith, but of a saving faith. *He believed in the Lord, and it was counted to him for righteousness.* And if Abraham is to be our pattern, as Mr. M. insists, then we must make a profession of this faith, or of none. To set aside Abraham's faith, which was, as James asserts, *a living faith*; and to introduce into its room a *dead faith*, which James calls *the faith of devils*; and to substitute this in the stead of the faith of Abraham, and to put God's seal, which belongs to God's covenant, to this new invented covenant of human device, is not "to conform our practice to the rules" of God's word; nor so much as to "endeavour" it. Besides,

2. Mr. M. says, p. 7. "That by which ANY ONE was to enter into this" external "covenant, was an external mark in the flesh." But faith, although a dead faith, is an internal thing, and is as much invisible, as any other mental qualification whatsoever: and therefore is not necessary on his scheme to be in the heart of the professor: nor need he profess it to be in his heart. For "to require more of the person to be admitted into the church, than is made necessary by the covenant on which it is framed, is really absurd." p. 22. For to imitate his manner of reasoning, it may be said, "to set this matter in the clearest light, an infidel, or an atheist, with a fair profession of the external covenant, when he is received into the visible church, on Mr. M.'s scheme, is in the sight of God either a member of it, or he is not. If he is a member, then the faith of devils is not necessary. If he is not, then on Mr. M.'s scheme there can be no visible church." This is Mr. M.'s manner of reasoning,

p. 49 [x]. I hope this may show the inconsistence of excluding *a living faith,* because it is an invisible mental qualification; and yet retaining *a dead faith,* which is equally an invisible mental qualification. To make Mr. M.'s scheme consistent, no mental qualification ought to be professed. Nothing but baptism, which is substituted in the room of circumcision, is needful. Baptism alone, without any profession at all, is the only requisite to constitute any man a member of Mr. M.'s visible church. But in the apostolic age no man was ever received into the visible church by baptism alone, without a profession. Mr. M. is obliged therefore to allow of the necessity of a profession. But this supposes the necessity of some *mental, invisible, internal* qualification to be professed: but this is inconsistent with the notion, that nothing is necessary but what is external and visible. So his scheme cannot hang together.—Besides,

3. To have no other faith than the devil has, and to profess no other faith than he has professed, is not to enter into covenant with God, unless the devil is in covenant with God. Therefore let the articles of faith to which professors give their assent be ever so orthodox, and their profession be ever

x These are Mr. M.'s words. "To set this matter in the clearest light; an unregenerate man, with a fair profession of religion, when received into the visible church, is in reality either a member of it, or he is not: if he is a member, his union must be constituted by something besides the covenant of grace, which extends to none but such as have true grace in heart: but if he is not in reality a member of the visible church, then there can be no such thing as a visible church, that has a real existence." Answ. The visible union of the visible church is constituted by a visible credible profession of a compliance with the covenant of grace: just as their real union is constituted by a real compliance with the covenant of grace.

To set this matter in the clearest light; in a Spanish milled dollar there is a certain quantity of silver, the stamp, &c.—Silver is essential to a real dollar. If there is no silver in the seeming dollar, it is not a real dollar, but a counterfeit one. So here—If a body of men profess friendship to Christ, they are a visible church of Christ: but if there is no friendship in their hearts, they are like the counterfeit dollar.

Should any one object, "a pewter dollar, with a good stamp, and well washed over, is a real dollar, or it is not: if it is a real dollar, then silver is not essential to a real dollar: if it is not a real dollar, then there is no such thing as a visible dollar in the world:" would any man by such logic as this, be induced to receive pewter dollars, professedly such, in pay for his whole estate?

so true; yet if they profess only "a simple belief of the simple truth," it is not a visible entering into covenant with God. It is not a covenanting transaction. Where there is no consent of the will professed, there is no covenant visibly made, in any case whatsoever. But if they profess not only to believe, but to *love the truth*, this is what no ungodly man can understandingly and honestly do. For to *receive the truth in the love of it*, is the scripture character of a true saint. 2 Thes. ii. 10. And so did Abraham, the father of all believers.——So again,

4. "To conform our practice to the rules of the christian religion," is to be real christians. This therefore must not be professed. But without this, there is no compliance with the Gospel covenant. He who does conform his practice to the rules of the Gospel, does really comply with the Gospel. And he who doth not, does really reject it. The one will go to heaven, and the other will go to hell. In this we are all agreed.

5. But Mr. M. says, they must profess, that they "will endeavour" to conform their practice to the rules of the christian religion.—But, pray, how much must they endeavour? Not so much as actually to conform: for in this real christianity consists. How much then? Can any man tell? Will you say, "as much as they can?" What! quite as much? What, every day, every hour of their lives? This is what no ungodly man ever did, or ever will do. Will you say, "they must sincerely endeavour?" But how sincere must ungodly men be? "As sincere as they can?" What, quite as sincere as they can, every day and every hour? This is what no ungodly man ever was, or ever will be.—Will you say, "they must endeavour so much, and so sincerely, as to keep from open scandal?" But is this enough? What if they live allowedly in secret sins, in enmity to God, in enmity to their neighbours, in stealing, in adultery, in sodomy? Will this do? Is this enough in the sight of God and conscience, that they are free from open scandal, while they live secretly in such and such like sins? Will you say, "no—they must *endeavour* to forsake all sin, and to conform their practice to all the rules of the christian religion?" But the question still returns, how

much must they endeavour? Not so much as to get free from the dominion of sin. For this is peculiar to the godly. Rom. vi. 14. How much then? No son of Adam can ever tell!

It can be determined what that repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ is, which the Gospel requires; and a man may know when he complies with the Gospel covenant; but it cannot be determined what Mr. M.'s external covenant requires; nor can any man know when he complies with it.

The lowest degree of true grace is a real and saving compliance with the Gospel covenant. *This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* John xvii. 3. Where saving grace begins, it shall end in glory. Its special nature can be as certainly determined, as the nature of the Gospel-way of salvation can; for it consists in a compliance with the Gospel. But this external covenant is neither law nor Gospel.

No man will say, that "the least degree of endeavour," which ever takes place in an ungodly man, is all that is required, to bring men into the external covenant. Nor will any man say, "that the greatest degree of endeavour" that ever takes place in an ungodly man, is necessary to this end. Nor can any man fix upon any certain degree, between the least and the greatest, that is the very degree necessary to bring a man into this covenant. It is a blind affair, and is adapted only to a blind conscience.

Every ungodly man, whose conscience is thoroughly awakened to know the truth about himself, knows that he is dead in sin, an enemy to God, "utterly indisposed, disabled, and opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil;" as Mr. M. will allow. And therefore, were such men to make a profession of the truth, they would profess this; and confess themselves to be altogether helpless and undone, under the wrath of God, the curse of the law, and condemned by the Gospel; (John iii. 18. 36. Gal. iii. 10.) and incapable of entering into covenant with God, (Ps. l. 16.) and coming into the kingdom of Christ, until they are born again. (John iii. 5.)—And how much soever pains such may ake, to escape

everlasting burnings, they can never think, that this labour of theirs brings them into covenant with the Holy One of Israel, so long as they find themselves dead in sin, enemies to God, and rejecters of Jesus Christ. But rather in the midst of all their diligence and endeavours, they do, as Mr. M. elsewhere observes [y], "in their own apprehensions grow worse and worse,"

Yea, the best saint on earth would not dare, with his eyes open, to enter into covenant with the holy One of Israel, without a mediator; or in the neglect of him whom God has provided on the foot of his own righteousness. No saint can have impudence enough, with his eyes open, to offer such a thing to God. For such know no way to come to the Father but by the Son. John xiv. 6. But self-righteous sinners, with stupid consciences, are good enough to come nigh to God in their own names, and enter into covenant with God in their own strength, and in their own righteousness, while with their whole heart they reject the mediator and the sanctifier revealed in the Gospel. But that baptism and the Lord's supper should be so degraded and prostituted, as to become seals to this *self-righteous graceless covenant of works*, must be not a little shocking to many pious minds. Nor indeed can sinners under deep and genuine conviction come into this scheme. For,

This external covenant is not adapted to the state of a sinner under genuine and deep conviction. For it is with such agreeable to Rom. vii. 9. *The commandment came, sin revived, and I died.* Rather it is suited only to the hearts of secure, self-flattering, self-righteous sinners, of blind and stupid consciences; and is of no use but to build them up in their self-righteous ways; to lead them to cry, "we have Abraham to our father, yea, we have one father, even God;" when, in the language of Christ, the meek and lowly Jesus, they are the *children of the Devil*, and the *wrath of God abideth on them.* Mat. iii. 9. John viii. 39—44. John iii. 36.

y Sermon on Rom. ix. 14, 15. p. 28.

SECTION VII.

Various distinctions stated, to render the subject more easy to be understood by Christians of the weakest capacities, and to enable them to answer the usual objections, at least to their own satisfaction.

1. WE are to distinguish between objections, which are taken from the nature of the covenant, as contained in the written instrument, and those objections which are taken from the character of many that have sealed it. If there was not one unholy graceless duty required of Abraham, in that covenant, Gen. xvii.; with which he complied, and which he sealed, Mr. M. must lose his cause, although the names and seals of thousands of graceless hypocrites are found annexed to it. For the nature of a written covenant is to be determined from the contents of it, and not from the hypocrisy of the men that have signed and sealed it. As for example, suppose we have a bond of 1000 *l.* signed and sealed by a man not worth a groat; it alters not the case, the bond is a bond of 1000 *l.* as much as if it was signed and sealed by a man ever so rich. For all mankind are agreed in this, that the nature of the bond is to be determined from the contents of the written instrument, and not from the poverty or knavery of the signers and sealers.

If the covenant with Abraham was the covenant of grace, yet possibly thousands of graceless men might be active in sealing it. Or if the covenant with Abraham required only freedom from open scandal, yet possibly it might be sealed by thousands who lived in open scandal. The ten tribes, for aught that appears, practised circumcision without one exception; and yet they lived in open idolatry from the time of their revolt to their captivity. That is, about 250 years. And if we are to determine the nature of the covenant from the character of the sealers; then from this, it will follow, that freedom from open idolatry was not required of the Israelites, in the covenant which they were under, and of which circumcision was a seal.

2. We ought to distinguish between *fact* and *right*, and to understand, that there is no conclusive arguing from the one to the other. As for instance: It is fact that there were tares sowed in the field; but it does not follow, that it was right that the servants should sow them there: this was the work of the devil.—It is fact, that there was a man who came into the visible church without a wedding garment; but it does not follow, that it was right for him so to do.—It is fact, that there were false professors, who unawares crept into the apostolic churches; but it does not follow that it was right, that they should creep in thither.—It is fact, that the net gathered bad fishes as well as good; but it does not follow that the fishermen were employed to gather any but good fish.—It is fact, that in the apostolic age, some impenitent hypocrites made a profession of faith and repentance, and were baptised; but it does not follow that it was right in them to make such a false profession.—It is fact, that the Israelites at Mount Sinai made a false profession, that they lied to God with their tongues, and flattered him with their lips; but it does not follow, either that it was right for them to do as they did, or that it is right for us to imitate their wicked example.—It is fact, that there have been in all ages graceless men in the visible church; but it does not follow, either that they had a right to be there, or that we ought to lay aside the covenant of grace, and to introduce a graceless covenant merely in order to open a door for their regular admission.—It is fact, when the doctrines and discipline of the Gospel are brought down to the taste of carnal men, that they appear to be better pleased with both; but it does not therefore follow, that it would be right for ministers to combine to set aside truth and strictness, and to introduce error and looseness, in order to please a wicked world.

3. There is a distinction to be made between an adult person's *really* entering into covenant, and *visibly* entering into covenant. He who complies with the covenant of grace, really entersi nto it: but he who professes to comply with it, visibly enters into it. The former is peculiar to the godly; but ungodly men may do the latter; for none but the godly

comply with the covenant of grace; but many ungodly men profess to comply with it. And these are like dry branches.

4. There is a difference between being in the covenant of grace, by a compliance with it; and being under the bonds of the covenant of grace, without a compliance with it. The former is peculiar to the godly; and from this state of grace none fall away: the latter is true of the most scandalous professor. An adultress woman may be under the bonds of the marriage covenant; and that even while she persists obstinately in her adulteries; but this gives her no right to the peculiar privileges of a virtuous wife. In this sense the idolatrous Israelites were in covenant with God, notwithstanding their obstinacy in that most scandalous practice of idolatry. Jer. iii. 14. But this gave them no right to covenant blessings. For it is our compliance with the covenant of grace which gives an interest in its blessings; and not our being under the bonds of it. For the ten tribes, who are said, in Jer. iii. 14. to be *married to the Lord*, and who had lived in idolatry ever since the days of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, for thus *playing the harlot, had been put away*, ver 1. and a *bill of divorce* had been given to them. ver. 8. They had been turned out of the promised land and sent into captivity, above an hundred years ago. 2 Kings xvii. 6. And so had not only forfeited, but were actually dispossessed of all the external privileges of the Abrahamic covenant: and yet they were still under covenant bonds. And so an excommunicated person may, in this sense, be said to be *in covenant, even in the covenant of grace*. For the engagement he came under to live according to that covenant all his days, when he made a profession of religion, is as binding in the sight of God as ever. But being *in covenant* in this sense, although it may increase obligation and guilt; yet entitles to no covenant privileges.

5. We are to distinguish between the means which God uses to bring us to comply with the covenant of grace, and our consenting to seal it in token of compliance. Those who have not complied with the covenant of grace, may attend the former without lying: but we ought in all cases to consent to a covenant in our hearts, before we are active in sealing it with our hands. For to seal a covenant with our hands,

when we reject it in our hearts, is in the sight of God to lie; but lying is not a means of grace.

6. We are to distinguish between the *man's* rule, and the *church's* rule of judging concerning his fitness publicly to enter into covenant, and publicly to seal it. The man himself makes his judgment by looking into his own heart; but the church makes their judgment by looking only to what is visible. Just as it is when men swear allegiance to the king, and renounce the pretender. The man who takes the oath of allegiance and abjuration, sees his way clear to do so, by looking inward, and finding such an heart in him; but he who administers the oaths, judges concerning the propriety of his own conduct in so doing, only by what outwardly appears. And thus it is also when persons enter into the marriage covenant; they see their way clear to act, by looking, each one into his own heart, and finding such affections in themselves as are answerable to the external transaction before them: but he who leads them to enter into the marriage covenant, judges of the propriety of his conduct only by what is visible. A man by looking into his own heart may be certain, that he believes and loves the doctrines of the Gospel; but the church, by outward appearances, can be certain of neither. Peter was certain he believed. Mat. xvi. 16. And as certain that he loved. John xxi. 15, 16, 17. And it is the duty of all to believe and love as he did. The blame is wholly in ourselves, if we do not. But we ought not to profess faith and love till we see our way clear; so as that in professing we may act an honest and conscientious part: even as it would be a wicked thing for persons to enter into the marriage covenant, if the prevailing judgment of their own minds were, that they were not in a proper state for such a transaction. However, it must be owned, that not to love Christ above all things, not to be willing to forsake all for his sake, and not to espouse his cause and interest heartily before men, is most inexcusable wickedness. Therefore,

7. We are to distinguish between things not at all commanded to any man; as eating blood: and things certainly commanded to some men; as to confess Christ before men. It is wrong to eat blood, if we at all doubt of the lawfulness

of it, because it is not a commanded duty to any man. So *he that doubteth is damned if he eat;* i. e. is self-condemned, because in such a case as this he ought not to eat. But it will not hence follow, that we shall be self-condemned, if we confess Christ before men without full assurance. For by the command of Christ we are bound in duty, if we are on his side in our hearts, openly to confess him before men. If we neglect it, in this case we sin. And if we do it in hypocrisy, we sin. A man's conscience in all such like cases will lead him to act according to his prevailing judgment. It is, in fact, thus with the conscientious part of mankind, in all doubtful matters; if they are obliged to act one way or the other, they make conscience of acting according to prevailing evidence.

8. We are to distinguish between objections which appear to be equally against both schemes, and other objections: and are to look upon the former as of no weight to settle the controversy. If they say it is difficult to know whether we comply with the covenant of grace; we may answer that it is as difficult, and more so, for any man to know whether he complies with the external covenant. If they say the church cannot be certain that any man has saving grace; we may answer, neither can the church be certain that any man believes in his heart, the doctrines which he professes with his mouth. If they say, assurance of our right to come is necessary on our scheme; we may answer, that it is no more necessary on one scheme than on the other. Besides, assurance of a right to come is attainable by true saints; but no man can know that he has a right on Mr. M.'s scheme. Because no man can know what his external covenant requires. If they say, Peter had not time to examine into the gracious state of the three thousand converts on the day of pentecost; we may answer, that he had as much time for this, as to examine into their doctrinal knowledge and moral sincerity. So also, those objections ought to weigh nothing, which are taken merely from the wickedness of mankind, and which would vanish of themselves, should the Spirit of God be poured from on high, as it was when the first Christian church was set up. For there is no more reason that the discipline of Christ's house should be

brought down to suit our corruptions, than that the doctrines of the Gospel should also.

9. We ought to distinguish between an appeal to *reason*, and an appeal to *corruption*. For example, these words are contained in the marriage covenant, unto which we oblige the woman to give her consent, viz. "You take this A. B. for your married husband, and promise to be a loving, faithful, and obedient wife to him," &c. Should a few women object against this covenant, and publicly propose an alteration, saying, "we pray, that the words, *loving, faithful, and obedient*, may be left out, for the sake of some young *women of tender consciences*, who cannot see their way clear to use them:" the only question would be this, "ought the alteration to be made in the marriage covenant, or in the young women?" Or in other words, "which is wrong, the woman's heart, or the covenant?" A question, which may easily be decided, if we appeal to reason or to Scripture: but if we appeal to corruption, the more we wrangle, the more we may. Some might say, "If the covenant is not altered, no woman can be married without full assurance. For it is not lawful to enter into this covenant in doubt. For *he that doubteth is damned*. An infallible assurance therefore is necessary. But who has this? Or what woman, on this plan, can be married, with a good conscience? And, besides, what minister can be able to judge whether any are fit to be married? By what rule shall it be certainly known when a woman is really disposed to be a *loving, faithful, and obedient* wife, and when she is not? Moreover, it will only tempt bad women to make a lying profession, while women of tender consciences will be kept back; and those who are married will grow proud because they are judged to be qualified. Meanwhile, the failings of married women will be more taken notice of, to their dishonour, for using this covenant. Upon the whole, it is a very bad plan, and a thing of a very dangerous tendency; therefore, we propose, that in all future times, these words, *loving, faithful, obedient*, be left out of the marriage covenant." How ridiculous would any woman make herself, that should advance such sentiments! But if this class of women were the majority, they might make a

shocking noise, but there would be no more sense in it, than if but one single woman was in the scheme.

10. We are to distinguish between that character which the Israelites gave of themselves, when Mount Sinai was covered with a thick cloud, and the Lord appeared in the flame of a devouring fire on the top of the Mount, and it lightened and thundered, and the voice of the trumpet was exceeding loud, and the people trembled under a sense of the greatness and majesty of the Holy One of Israel, and every one, even *all the people, answered with one voice, and said, all the words which the Lord hath said, will we do;* (such manifestations of God, and a people under such deep religious impressions, never had been before heard of since the world began: so that even God himself, judging according to appearances, was ready to say, *surely, they are my people, children that will not lie.* Isai. lxiii. 8.)—And that character which they afterwards gave of themselves, by their conduct forty years in the wilderness. In the former, they appear heartily disposed to comply with God's covenant. In the latter, they appear a rebellious generation, whose *hearts were not right with God, neither were they steadfast in his covenant.* Psal. lxxviii. 37.

11. We are to distinguish between that character which the Israelites gave of themselves, by their conduct forty years in the wilderness, by which it appeared that they *had not eyes to see, nor ears to hear, nor a heart to understand;* (for they *made a calf* even before the Mount of God. And *rebelled at Kadesh-barnea;* and *at Taberah, and Massah, and at Kibroth-hattaavah, they provoked the Lord to wrath.* So that Moses might well say, *Ye have been rebellious against the Lord, from the day that I knew you.* Deut. ix. 7—24.) And that character, which that pious generation gave of themselves, who in the plains of Moab heard Moses rehearse all God's ways to that nation, and their ways to God, forty years in the wilderness, and now on a review of the whole, manifested a disposition unitedly to become God's people, to enter into God's covenant anew, and to bind themselves to him, as their God, to love him, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep all his commandments. Concerning the former cha-

racter, more severe things are spoken in Scripture, than of any other, which that people ever gave of themselves under that dispensation: and concerning the latter, more good things. The piety of this new generation God remembered many ages after, Jer. ii. 2. *Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals;* ver. 3. *Israel was holiness to the Lord.* See also Judges ii. 7. *And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that out-lived Joshua.* So that they transmitted the true religion to the next generation, and kept it up all the days of their lives. And if these things are well considered, and the great comparative darkness of that age of the world, and the abundant pains which Moses took in the plains of Moab to explain the covenant, and to render them deeply sensible of their obligations to comply with it, with all their hearts, no man will find cause to say that Moses acted an unfaithful part, in leading that people to enter into that very covenant, in the manner he did.

Obj. But it was the design of Moses to charge in a public manner, as what visibly and publicly appeared to be the truth of the case, those very individual persons with being unregenerate, on that very day, in which he led them to enter into covenant. For he says, *the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.* Deut. xxix. 4. p. 18. 24.

Ans. It is evident, that in the public speech which Moses made to the Israelites in the plains of Moab, of which these words are a part, he constantly addresses them in their national capacity, and not as individuals. Thus in the paragraph in which these words are contained, ver. 2. *Moses called unto all Israel, and said unto them, ye have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes, in the land of Egypt,* &c. Whereas every one in the congregation, who were but one month under forty years of age, which was doubtless by far the greatest part of the congregation, never were in Egypt, for they were born in the wilderness, since their fathers left Egypt. And instances of the like nature are to be observed through the whole speech. Thus we know, that the carcasses of the men that sinned at *Kadesh-barnea,* on the return of

the spies, were all of them fallen in the wilderness; and yet he speaks to the present generation, who personally had no hand in that sin, as though they were the very individual persons that had committed it. Chap. ix. 23. *Then you rebelled against the commandment of the Lord.* See also Deut. i. 19—35. Whereas there was not one of those rebels alive; no, not so much as one. Num. xxvi. 63—65. And this is precisely the truth of the case, with the text under consideration. For,

Moses brought in no public charges against the nation, but for public crimes; not an instance can be produced from the beginning of Deuteronomy to the text under consideration. But this new generation, which were grown up, and which were now about to enter into covenant with God, had not been guilty of any public crimes, to give themselves a bad character. It does not appear from the whole story that Moses had any public grounds for a public charge against them, as being an ungodly generation. Nay, the fact is, that they always behaved so well both before and after, that they were by God himself, after they were dead and gone, represented as a very religious and godly generation. Jer. ii. 2, 3. Jude ii. 7. Compared to a *choice vine,* Isa. v. 2. *Wholly a right seed,* Jer. ii. 21.

To suppose Moses charged them in a public manner, as an unregenerate, ungodly generation, unjustly, without ever mentioning one single fact to the disadvantage of their character, is very unreasonable: especially as the sense before given to the words under consideration is an easy and natural sense, and removes all difficulties, and renders the speech and conduct of Moses perfectly consistent. For, as to all the instances of public conduct contained in the long narrative which Moses had given, from the time they left Egypt, to that very day, which were evidences of blind eyes, deaf ears, and hard hearts, this present generation were not active in them. Those facts, those public crimes, although committed by that nation, were not done by the individual persons which made up the present congregation, who entered into covenant with God; but by the old generation, whose carcasses were fallen in the wilderness; as any man may see

that will read all the preceding chapters of the book. We ought not, by giving a wrong sense to the words of Moses, to render his public speech and his public conduct inconsistent; and then to charge him with acting a dishonest part in leading that people to enter into covenant, in the manner in which in fact he did: or to deny the fact, under a pretence of saving his character; when indeed his character cannot be saved this way, because the fact is undeniably true.

If it should be inquired, why did Moses speak thus, to this present generation, as they had not been personally guilty of that course of rebellious conduct themselves; but were themselves a godly generation?—The answer is easy.—He did it to give them a clear view and humbling sense of their national sins, and the justice of God in the national judgments which he brought upon them; that they might know, that it was not for their righteousness that God did bring them into that good land; but merely of his great goodness, and because he had promised it to Abraham. Deut. ix. 5. To the end they might so reflect on the depravity of their own hearts, and be so deeply abased before God, as to be thereby prepared for that holy and solemn transaction before them, of entering into covenant with the holy One of Israel: that having in view how their fathers had entered into covenant at Sinai, and had broken covenant, so that all their carcasses had fallen in the wilderness, they might take warning thereby, and remember and keep the covenant of the Lord their God, that it might be well with them, and with their children after them.

12. We are to distinguish between the character which the three thousand converts on the day of pentecost gave of themselves, in that deep conviction of sin and guilt which they manifested, when they appeared to be *pricked at the heart*, and in that repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, which they openly professed when they appeared cordially to comply with Peter's exhortation, *repent and be baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the remission of sins*, by *gladly receiving his word*, and offering themselves to baptism, and to join with a persecuted party, whose master had lately been put to a most shameful and

scandalous death, in the most public manner, on the most public occasion, at the risk of every thing dear to them in the world: and the character which men ordinarily give of themselves in offering to join with the church, without any special concern about their souls, when it is esteemed no small honour to be church members, and enjoy church privileges.—The former, to a judgment of charity, appeared to be true converts, whatever may be thought of the latter.

13. We are to distinguish between what is *visible*, and what is *real*. Many in the eyes of men are reputed godly, who in the eyes of God, as searcher of hearts, are not so. The former have a right in the sight of the church, to enter into the covenant of grace, in a public profession, and to seal the covenant; but the latter only have a right in the sight of God. For the former appear to be godly; but the latter only are really so. The former have a visible, the latter have a real right.

14. There is a distinction to be made between a right to sealing ordinances on *our own account*, and a right on the *account of another*. Thus pious parents have a right for sealing ordinances for themselves, on their own account, as being themselves really in covenant with God, by a compliance with it: but their infant children have a right to baptism, not on their own account, but simply on that of their parents, considered as parts of their parents, branches grown out of the old root: and so may be baptised without respect to any internal qualification, at present inherent in them, either moral or gracious.

Obj. If, in infant baptism, no respect is had to any internal qualification in the infant, then the seal is set to a blank.

Ans. *Then* the seal is set to a blank, when there is no covenant entered into: but when there is a covenant entered into and sealed, there is no room for the objection. But in infant-baptism there is a covenant entered into. For God says to the pious parent, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed." And the pious parent replies, "I choose thee for my God and the God of my child." So that here is a covenant entered into between God and the pious parent, in

behalf of himself and his infant, in the very act of offering it to God in baptism. And baptism is a seal, not to a blank, but to this covenant, which in fact takes place between God and the pious parent.

15. We are to distinguish between covenanting with God actively, in a visible manner, as a pious parent does when he dedicates his child to God in baptism, and promises to bring it up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and being laid under the bonds of the covenant passively, as is the case with the child. God speaks to the pious parent in that ordinance, saying, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed, i. e. if they will take heed to walk in my ways." The pious parent answers, in the act of offering the child to baptism, "I choose thee for my God, and for the God of my child. And I promise to bring up my child for thee. And, oh, that it might live in thy sight, be thy child, and walk in thy ways!" The parent is active; but the child is merely passive. We may bring ourselves under the bonds of the covenant, by our own act and deed, as the adult did in the plains of Moab, when they renewed covenant there: or we may be brought under the bonds of the covenant, by the act of another authorized by God so to do. Thus Moses laid all the infants in the congregation, in the plains of Moab, under the bonds of the covenant. And thus parents, in offering their children to baptism, lay them under the bonds of the covenant.

16. If no one is to be baptised, till by his own act and deed he enters into covenant with God, be it the covenant of grace, or a graceless covenant; then no infant is to be baptised on either plan: because no infant, by his own act and deed, enters into any covenant of any sort, or so much as knows, that there is any covenant of any sort to be entered into. If the child has a right to baptism, on its parents' account, and not on its own, infant-baptism can be vindicated, as well on the plan of a gracious covenant, as on the plan of an ungracious one; but if the child's right to baptism is founded on its own personal compliance with the covenant, infant-baptism must be given up on the plan of a covenant of moral sincerity, and a right doctrinal belief; for no infant was ever thus qualified: but some infants have been sancti-

fied from the womb, and so, in this sense, have been in the covenant of grace. Luke i. 15.

17. It must apparently be an unspeakable advantage, to be under the watch and care of a godly church, who have a real spirit of fidelity in them; and, like Abraham, will command all under their care to fear the Lord. Gen. xviii. 19. And it is equally evident, that it can be of no advantage to be under the watch and care of an ungodly church, who will neither walk in the ways of God themselves, nor bring up those committed to their care for God. God put confidence in Abraham, *I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him*, &c. But there is no confidence to be put in an ungodly man, that he will be faithful to God, with respect to his own soul, or the souls of his children. Hos. vi. 4. Mat. vii. 16, 17, 18.

SECTION VIII.

Mr. Mather's scheme inconsistent with itself.

THERE are three things in Mr. M.'s external covenant, viz. The conditions required; the privileges promised; and the seals; and his ideas concerning each of these, as expressed in his book, are inconsistent.

I. As to the conditions required, in order to a covenant right to all covenant privileges, his ideas are inconsistent.—For,

1. Sometimes he makes circumcision the only condition. "For that by which," says he, "any one was to enter into this covenant, was an external mark in the flesh. *This is my covenant, which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee; every man-child among you shall be circumcised.* But that by which any one enters into the covenant of grace, is *the circumcision of the heart.*" p. 7 [m]. So

[m] "That by which any one enters into the covenant of grace is the circumcision of the heart:" and yet he is obliged to deny this, p. 21.; and to affirm that the circumcision of the heart intends no more than entering into his external

that the circumcision of the flesh brings men into the external covenant, and gives them a covenant right to all its privileges; just as the circumcision of the heart brings men into the covenant of grace, and gives them a covenant right to all the blessings of that. But the circumcision of the heart, as the phrase is used in Scripture, is a real compliance with the covenant of grace, and is connected with eternal life. Rom. ii. 29. And accordingly, he speaks of the circumcision of the flesh as a compliance with the external covenant, p. 8. "This covenant remained to be complied with. Abraham must needs be circumcised."

And indeed, if Mr. M. was disposed to turn the covenant with Abraham into his external covenant, of necessity the circumcision of the flesh must be the only condition of it: because there was nothing else external which took place in that covenant recorded in Gen. xvii. to which Mr. M. could with any colour lay claim; for Abraham made no profession but a profession of saving faith. But this was a visible compliance with the covenant of grace, and not with the external covenant. If, therefore, he did any thing at all by way of compliance with Mr. M.'s external covenant, it was only merely and simply making 'an external mark in the flesh.'

2. And as Mr. M. thus sometimes represents the circumcision of the flesh to be a compliance with the external covenant with Abraham; so he sometimes represents baptism as entitling to all the privileges of his external covenant, under the Gospel dispensation. For, according to him, all who are baptised "are Abraham's children, and heirs according to the promise." p. 13. "For a child baptised in infan-

graceless covenant, in order to get rid of that plain text, Ezek. xliv. 9. *Thus saith the Lord God, no stranger, uncircumcised in heart, &c. shall enter into my sanctuary;* which is a prophecy of the glorious state of the church spoken of, Isa. ii. 3, 4, 5. Chap. xi. 1—9. and lx. 21. When satan will be bound, agreeable to Rev. xx. and when Mr. M.'s external covenant will be no more practised upon in the whole earth for a thousand years. For in that day, *Thus saith the Lord God, no stranger, uncircumcised in heart, shall enter into my sanctuary;* i. e. none shall be admitted but such who in their profession, life, and conversation, appear to be godly. For in that day right doctrine and right discipline will universally take place, and then all will be agreed: *For they shall see eye to eye.* Isai. lii. 8.

cy," he says, "is thereby as really brought into covenant, as one that is baptised in riper years. It conveys the same privileges to the one as to the other." p. 16. But the adult, having made a profession, was, in the apostolic age, by baptism received into full communion with the church, in complete standing, as is evident from Acts ii. 37—47. And in this view Mr. M. considers infant baptism, as "a valuable privilege;" "as it entitles to the appointed means of grace;" p. 54, 55. that is, to all church privileges: and insists, that those who are baptised in infancy, "should be told that they are really in covenant 'with God, that they are members of the visible church, and are entitled to the privileges of it.' And as they have a title to the privileges, so "they are in duty bound to seek the enjoyment of, and attend upon these privileges." p. 55, 56. For, according to Mr. M. "a child dedicated to God in baptism, is thereby brought into covenant with God, and has a promise left to it, of the means of grace, and the strivings of God's holy spirit, in order to render them effectual for salvation: but an unbaptised child is left in the kingdom of darkness." p. 59, 60. And he adds, "it is but trifling to say, that although baptised persons may be styled members of the church universal; yet they are not members of any particular church." p. 56. So that, upon the whole, it appears, that by baptism alone, infants are made members of the church, in such sort as to have a divine right and title to all church privileges: which is full as much as can be said of any, who are in full communion, in complete standing. And thus we see what Mr. M.'s scheme is, in this view of it. And here let us stop a moment or two, and look round and consider where we are now. For if these things are true, it will follow,

1. That no internal mental qualifications are now, or ever were, requisite, in order to a right to all church privileges in the sight of God; neither moral, nor gracious; neither faith, nor practice of one sort, or of the other; no, nothing at all, but only "an external mark in the flesh," or water baptism [n]. And therefore,

n The land of Canaan was one chief external blessing of the Abrahamic covenant. Gen. xvii. 8. A compliance with that covenant gave a covenant right to a

2. In order to our being satisfied in our own consciences, that we have a right in the sight of God to come to the Lord's table, we are not "to examine ourselves of our knowledge to discern the Lord's body, of our faith to feed upon him, of our repentance, love, and new obedience," *as the assembly of divines* imagined an hundred and twenty years ago: nor are we to examine ourselves of our doctrinal knowledge, orthodoxy, moral sincerity, or of any thing else, of an internal, mental nature. For a right to the Lord's supper has no dependance on any thing of this nature. For, but one thing was needful to satisfy the conscience of the Jew, viz. "The external mark in the flesh," which might easily be known. And the Christian has nothing to do, but to procure and keep by him, a well attested certificate of his baptism, to give him a full assurance of his right to come to the Lord's table. For,

3. No crime, although of the most scandalous nature, could vacate this right in the sight of God, or in the sight of conscience; because this right was not founded in any moral qualifications whatsoever, but only in "an external mark in the flesh," or water baptism. But the idolatry of the Jew did not at all take away "the external mark in the flesh;" nor

possession of it. Num. xxxii. 11, 12. The Israelites who came out of Egypt were all circumcised. Josh. v. 5. If in circumcision, they fully complied with that covenant on their part; then their carcasses did not fall in the wilderness, because they on their part broke covenant, but because God broke covenant on his part. They on their part fulfilled the only condition on which the land of Canaan was promised, but God was not true to the covenant on his part. So the fault was not in them, but in him; and in this view, Lev. xxvi. and Deut. xxviii. are entirely inconsistent with the Abrahamic covenant. And so also is the divine conduct in the expulsion of the Jews out of the land of Canaan by Nebuchadnezzar, formerly, as well as in their present dispersion. For they on their part have always kept covenant. For they have always circumcised their children, from the time they took possession of the land of Canaan to this day. Nor can Psalm l. 16. Isai. i. 10—15. Ezek. xliv. 9. Mat. v. 23, 24. Heb. iii. 19. and an hundred other texts, be reconciled with this scheme.

And if baptism alone, without respect to any mental qualification, gives a covenant right to all the external privileges of the visible church of Christ; then no consistent meaning can be given to these texts, Mat xviii. 17. Mat. xxii. 12. Cor. v. 11. and Chap. xi. 28, 29. Tit. iii. 10, 11. Rev. ii. 4, 5. &c. &c. The truth is, by sealing a covenant we are bound to fulfil it: but it is an actual compliance with a covenant, that entitles us to its blessings. Lev. xxvi. Deut. xxviii. Rom. viii. 13. Mat. iii. 9, 10.

can the open infidelity and debauchery of the Christian prove, that the certificate which he has of his baptism, is not authentic. Let the idolatrous Jew look on "the external mark in the flesh," and let the infidel and immoral Christian look on his certificate, and their consciences may be confirmed, in a full assurance of their divine right and title to all covenant privileges [o]. Therefore,

[o] This is a short and easy method for dishonest, cheating, promise-breaking professors to come to the Lord's Table with a good conscience; and for those who live in the *neglect of family prayer*, and who, instead of bringing up their children in the *nurture and admonition of the Lord*, train them up to *live after the flesh in chambering and wantonness*; while they themselves live in malice and envy towards their fellow professors. Mr. M. is of opinion, that it is of very bad and dangerous tendency, for those who are admitted into the church to make a profession of godliness, lest by their ungodly lives they should disgrace their profession, and tempt others to turn infidels. p. 53, 54. And for the same reason it is not best that any of the professed followers of Christ should pretend to be honest men, lest their dishonest practices should sink the holy religion of Christ into contempt, and promote infidelity in the world. For indeed it is come to this already, that among the Mahometans, it is a common thing when men are charged with cheating or suspected of any dishonest trick, to reply with indignation, "what! do you think I am a christian?"

Nor can it be justified, in Mr. M.'s way of reasoning, for the church to require a profession of moral honesty, of those whom they admit to full communion. For every one of his objections against a profession of godliness are of full force against a profession of a disposition honestly to pay our debts, and act up to our word and promise in our dealings with our fellow-men. For, 1. such an honest disposition is an invisible qualification, and we cannot be certain that men have it in their hearts; and therefore on this plan there can be no visible church. p. 48. Besides, 2. according to this, the design of God must have been to have made a visible distinction between honest and dishonest men. But this is contrary to Scripture, which represents the visible church like a net which catches all sorts, good and bad. p. 49, 50. 3. Admission to full communion on this plan will do hurt to men's souls, tend to make them think they are honest when they are not, and to blow up pride in their hearts, and to make them say with the Pharisee, *God, I thank thee, I am not as others are, extortioners, unjust*, &c. p. 52, 53. And, 4. it will tend greatly to wound religion, when afterwards they neglect to do as they say, and are not honest to pay their debts. p. 54. Besides, 5. This scheme makes infant baptism a mere nullity. For if moral honesty is a necessary qualification for sealing ordinances, then infants cannot receive the seal. For the church can have no positive evidence that they have an honest disposition. The Anabaptists, therefore, are right in rejecting the baptism of infants. p. 54.

These are Mr. M.'s "most weighty and material objections, an answer to which he has never yet seen attempted." p. 48. But it so happens, that they are of equal weight against himself, unless he will say, that moral honesty is not a qualification necessary for church-membership.

4. No public profession of any kind, nor freedom from public scandal, are necessary in order to a visible right to all church privileges, in the sight of men. For, if our real right in the sight of God, does not depend on any internal qualification, either moral or gracious; no pretence need to be made to any such qualification, in order to a visible right. The Jew had nothing to do, in order to prove his right, but only to make it appear, that he had been circumcised. And the christian has nothing to do, in order to prove his right, but only to make it appear, that he has been baptised. Nor can the church consistently demand any thing further, on Mr. M.'s scheme. For what he says, p. 22. is the plain, simple truth: "To require more of the person to be admitted into the church, than is made necessary by the covenant on which it is framed, is really absurd." But if all these things are true, then it will follow,

1. That Mr. M. is inconsistent with himself, in putting an "outward profession" along with "an external covenant relation," as he does in p. 9. and for saying as he does, in p. 21. "I will allow that none but such as profess the christian religion, and will endeavour to conform his practice to the rules of it, ought to be admitted into the church;" and for asserting, p. 44. that "the disorderly and vicious should be debarred." For, if baptism alone is all that is necessary to a covenant right to all church privileges; then baptism alone is all that ought to be required in order to an admission into the church. Nor is a public profession, or freedom from public scandal, at all requisite. If baptism alone gives a covenant right to all church privileges, if there is "a promise left" by God to those who have this; no man, nor any number of men under heaven, have a right to require any thing else. So that, to insist that "none but such as profess the christian religion, and will endeavour to conform his practice to the rules of it, ought to be admitted into the church;" and that "disorderly and vicious persons ought to be debarred;" "and to keep such back from enjoying the privileges and means appointed for the good of their souls," is a very strange affair. p. 59. And therefore, to use Mr. M.'s own words, and to apply them to his own conscience, p. 58. "I would

request such as have thought and acted upon this scheme, impartially to examine what I have offered. It is surely no small matter to shut the kingdom of heaven, (as the visible church is often called,) against men, and not to suffer such to enter as would." A horrid crime, indeed! And yet the very crime, of which Mr. M. stands publicly convicted out of his mouth. For he shuts the kingdom of heaven against all baptised persons, and will not admit one of them into the church, "but such as profess the christian religion, and endeavour to conform their practice to the rules of it:" although, according to his own scheme, they are as much in the church as he is, and have as good a right to all church privileges as himself. Therefore,

2. Mr. M. may be publicly called to an account, and admonished out of his own mouth, in his own words, for making infant baptism "a mere nullity, a thing of nought," "And what is a baptised infant to be accounted of? Is he a member of the visible church, or is he not?" p. 54. And to be rebuked for his conduct, for practically "representing and treating such as are baptised, as if they were not really in covenant," p. 56. by refusing to admit them to covenant privileges without a profession, when, according to his own scheme, he ought to tell all baptised persons, that "they are really in covenant with God; that they are members of the visible church; and are entitled to the privileges of it," p. 55, 56. merely by their baptism, without any profession at all, and without any endeavours at all, even all of them, "old and young, moral and immoral." p. 42. For,

3. To say, that "the disorderly and vicious ought to be debarred," p. 44. and so "to require more than is made necessary by the covenant, on which the church is framed, is really absurd." p. 22. For if baptism gives a covenant right to the Lord's supper, nothing else is necessary.

4. To say, that "the disorderly and vicious ought to be debarred" by the church, is to say implicitly, that such ought to debar themselves; their own consciences ought to pronounce sentence upon them. But what if a man's conscience should happen to be convinced of this plain Scripture truth, that to rise in rebellion against the great God, is one of the

most "disorderly" things a creature can be guilty of; and that to continue obstinate in this rebellion, after all the external means which God has used to reclaim us, is one of the most "vicious?" Must not his own conscience debar him on Mr. M.'s scheme? Or will it do to tell such a man, had you been guilty of stealing but five shillings from one of your neighbours, for this sin, if considered only as against man, your conscience ought to have debarred you, until you had come to repentance and made restitution; but your conscience ought not to debar you for being an obstinate, impenitent rebel against the God of heaven, the great Sovereign of the universe?" Or might we not, for telling a man thus, be in danger of that rebuke in Mark xxiii. 24. *Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.* For, to rise in rebellion against an earthly prince, would be esteemed more "disorderly and vicious than barely to steal five shillings from our neighbour. And to rise in rebellion against the great God is doubtless more "disorderly and vicious," than to rise in rebellion against an earthly monarch.—In a word, if baptism alone does not entitle to all chuch privileges, both "young and old, moral and immoral," p. 42. without respect to any mental qualification whatsoever, it will not be easy to find a place where a man may set his foot down and be consistent with himself, unless we return back to the good old way, to the apostolic plan, according to which, not baptism, but saving faith, is considered as the condition of the covenant, and that which entitles to all its blessings, Gal. iii. 26. 29. *For ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise:*

Mr. M. says, p. 42. "As to baptised children, I allow they have a right to the sacrament of the Lord's supper, but not a right of immediate possession; according to the apostle's representation in Gal. iv. 12. *Now, I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all, but is under tutors and governors, until the time appointed of the father.*"—But the child, though ever so young, eats bread at his father's table, and no one disputes his right. And when the child is of age, and his father

is dead, and the estate is to be divided among the heirs, the child has nothing to do in order to prove his right to a share in his father's estate, but to bring a certificate from the town clerk, in order to prove from the town records, that he is the child of the deceased. Nor is such a child obliged to make any profession, or to enter into any covenant before *the court of probate,* in order to come to a possession of his right. The law gives him his right without any such pre-requisites. For his right is not founded upon any thing of such a nature, but simply upon his being the child of such a father. This therefore is the only point to be proved. And just the same to be consistent, must be the case on Mr. M.'s plan. The only point which one who was baptised in infancy, has to prove, when he becomes adult, in order to take possession of his right, is that he was baptised. Let him therefore produce a well attested certificate of this, and nothing further can be demanded.

If it should be said, that all that Mr. M. means is, that baptism gives a conditional right to the Lord's table. i. e. a right upon condition of a profession of religion and freedom from scandal; it may be replied, that the unbaptised have a right to sealing ordinances upon these conditions, according to Mr. M.'s own scheme, and therefore this cannot be his meaning. For this, to use his own words, would be to make baptism "a mere nullity, a thing of naught." But this brings us, in the next place, to observe,

II. That Mr. M.'s ideas of the peculiar privileges of his external covenant are also inconsistent. For if it should be inquired, what advantage hath Mr. M.'s graceless covenanter, or what profit is there in baptism administered upon a graceless covenant? He has no right, upon his scheme, to the apostle's answer in Rom. iii. 1, 2. *Much every way,* &c. For,

1. As to *the oracles of God,* which he claims for one of the chief privileges of his external covenant, p. 9. he will grant, that they are common to the unbaptsied, i. e. the unbaptised have as good a right to read and hear the word of God, as the baptised have; and as good a right to believe and embrace the Gospel. For, by Christ's last commission,

the Gospel is to be preached to all nations, to the uncircumcised Greek as well as to the circumcised Jew: yea, to *every creature:* and that, previous to, and in order to prepare men for baptism, Mark xvi. 15, 16. So that there is not the least need of being in his external covenant, in order to have as good a right, to hear and believe, and be justified by the Gospel; as any man on earth has. *For there is no difference* Rom. iii. 22. compare Mat. x. 5, 6. Mat. xxviii. 19.

2. As to sealing ordinances, he is full in it, that baptism alone gives no right to them, for ourselves, or for our children, which can be enjoyed without a profession of the Christian religion, p. 21. and freedom from scandal, p. 44.; and one who never was baptised, may on his scheme, be admitted to sealing ordinances, for himself and his children, upon the same terms; no higher, nor lower, being required. So that there is no advantage, in this respect, in being in his external covenant.——And,

3. As to *the influences of the spirit, whereby the means of grace are rendered effectual to the salvation of sinners,* he holds, that no unconverted man has a covenant right to them; but that *God hath mercy on whom he will have mercy:* and has been at the pains to publish a laboured sermon on the subject, to prove the point, and to answer objections; which was printed but six years ago. And if this be true, the baptised cannot claim a covenant right to these influences of the spirit, any more than the unbaptised. And therefore, although in the book now under consideration, p. 59, 60. he says, "a child dedicated to God in baptism is thereby brought into covenant with God, and has a promise left to it, of the means of grace, and the strivings of the Spirit, in order to render them effectual for salvation: but an unbaptised child is left in the kingdom of darkness;" yet it is true, on his own scheme, that such a baptised child, while in a Christless state, is under the wrath of God, the curse of the law, a child of the devil, and an heir of hell, and is dependant on God's sovereign mercy, as really as any other child. Yea, he declares, in his sermon on *Divine Sovereignty,* p. 5, 6. that "sometimes those who to an eye of reason are the most likely to partake of the blessings of the Gospel, are pass-

ed by; and others of whom we have little or no hope, are recovered by sovereign grace, and enriched with saving mercy. Thus we should have thought Judas, who was one of Christ's disciples, and his constant follower, was more likely to obtain the blessing of saving mercy than Saul, who was a fierce, zealous, and open enemy to Christ: but we see God ordered it otherwise." And he adds, p. 7. "This was not a thing peculiar to that generation: but is is the sovereign grace of God, by which any one, at any time, is brought to obey the truth to the saving of his soul."

4. As to the advantage of church discipline, Mr. M. grants, what every body knows to be too true, that the baptised are taken no more care of, generally, than the unbaptised. p. 56. Nor will it mend the matter, if we should all embrace Mr. M.'s scheme, and fill up our churches more and more with ungodly men. For Gospel discipline never was, and never will be, maintained by ungospel churches. For so long as men are themselves at heart enemies to the religion of Christ, its doctrines and duties, they will not themselves be cordially subject to its doctrines and duties; much less join heartily to bring others to be in subjection to them. As it is written, Mat. vii. 16, 17. *Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth corrupt fruit.*

III. Nor are his ideas of the seals of the covenant any more consistent. For,

His notion of a seal is, that it is a rite of confirmation, whereby, in a mutual covenant, both parties bind themselves to comply with the covenant contained in the written instrument. But he grants, that in the written instrument, in the present case, the covenant of grace is contained, and is the principal thing; and yet, by sealing this instrument we do not pretend to a compliance with the covenant of grace in our own consciences, or profess any such thing before the world. Nay, we do not profess to have, in the lowest degree, a heart to comply with it, nor mean that the act of sealing should have this import; although in all other matters, except those of religion, this is what is meant by sealing. But instead of a compliance with the covenant of grace, which

is the principal thing, according to him, contained in the written instrument, we only profess a compliance with his graceless covenant, and bind ourselves to such religious exercises and endeavours, as are consistent with a total rejection of the covenant of grace in our hearts: even such a total rejection, as God threatens with eternal damnation. p. 36, 37. But of this we have spoken before, Sect. V.

Thus inconsistent are Mr. M.'s notions of his external covenant, its conditions, its peculiar privileges, and its seals.

To mention but one inconsistence more in Mr. M.'s scheme. The external covenant is, according to him, the appointed means; and saving faith and conversion, or a compliance with the covenant of grace, is the end. p. 10, 11. And yet he says, p. 8. "Although a person was in a state of grace, and was consequently included in the covenant of grace, yet this covenant remained to be complied with: Abraham was a true believer before, yet he must needs be circumcised." But if Abraham was converted and justified before he was circumcised, then circumcision was not instituted as a means of his conversion, or as a pre-requisite to his justification. Mr. M. adds, p. 12. that his external graceless covenant is also to be a means "to train-up believers in holiness." That is, holy Abraham, instead of those holy exercises in which he had lived above 20 years, even ever since he began a holy life, was in Gen. xvii. by God Almighty laid under covenant bonds, to enter into a course of unholy religious exercises, such as take place in impenitent self-righteous sinners, to the end that he might "be trained up in holiness." Gal. iii. 3. *Are ye so foolish? having begun in the spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?* Besides,

That believers should be under the bonds of two covenants, of a nature as contrary and inconsistent as sin and holiness, is what cannot be rendered consistent. And to say, that this external covenant is neither sinful nor holy, is either to say, that there is a whole system of religious exercises of heart, which are neither conformable nor unconformable with the holy law of God: which is to deny, that the law of God is a universal rule of life, contrary to the whole tenour of Scripture. Gal. iii. 10. Mat. xxii. 37—40. 1 Cor. x. 31.

Or which is equally absurd, to say, that no exercise of heart is required in his external covenant; nothing but bodily motions, unconnected with the heart.

Indeed the very notion of two rules of duty, a holy, and an unholy one, which is essential to his notion of two covenants, is an inconsistence. For two contrary laws, instead of binding both at once, must mutually destroy each other, and can, neither of them, bind to any thing. That law which is *a school-master to bring us to Christ*, requires sinless perfection on pain of eternal damnation. Compare Gal. iii. 24. with verse 10.

And thus I have finished the remarks which I design to make on Mr. Mather's book. There are other things contained in it equally exceptionable; but if his external covenant, which is the foundation of his whole scheme, is proved to be an unscriptural and inconsistent thing, his whole scheme is sufficiently confuted. Besides, while the whole controversy is reduced to one single point, the common people will be under better advantages to make a judgment for themselves. But now, the only point which the reader has to determine, in order to settle the whole controversy in his own mind, is this, viz. *Are baptism and the Lord's supper seals of the covenant of grace, or of a graceless covenant?*

To conclude:

Let it be remembered, that "the Westminster confession of faith," which is adopted by the church of Scotland; and the Savoy confession of faith," which is adopted by the churches in Massachusetts and in Connecticut; declare that "sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace." And let it be remembered, that these confessions of faith know nothing of Mr. M.'s *external graceless covenant*, either name or thing. And let it also be remembered, that "the heads of agreement" which were assented to in England in the last century, by those called Presbyterians and Congregationalists, and which are adopted by the churches in Connecticut, declare, "that none shall be admitted as members, in order to communion in all the special ordinances of the Gospel, but such persons as are knowing and sound in the fundamental doctrine of the Christian religion; without scandal in their lives; and

to a judgment regulated by the word of God, are persons of visible holiness and honesty, *credibly professing cordial subjection to Jesus Christ.*" Ezek. xliv. 9. Rom. x. 10. And further, let it be remembered, that this is the plan on which these churches are professedly founded.

For the general council at Saybrook, A. D. 1708, came unanimously into this result, viz. "As we assent to the "foregoing heads of agreement, so we unanimously resolve, "as the Lord shall enable us, to practise according to them."

Now the question is, whether this plan is agreeable to the word of God, or not. For we are all agreed, that the word of God is the only standard by which all creeds and confessions of human composure, are to be tried. Mr. Mather has offered what he thought proper on the one side, and I have offered what to me appears needful on the other, and now it belongs to every reader to judge for himself.

And now, therefore, Oh, reader, as this grand and important question in which thy soul is deeply interested, as well as the souls of many thousands of others, is referred to thee, that thou mayest make a judgment for thyself; so I *entreat thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels*, who are spectators in this controversy, to set aside all carnal affections and worldly considerations, and to view the whole in the light of God's holy word, and to make up a judgment for thyself, as in the presence of God, and with the same uprightness and impartiality, as though the last trumpet was to sound on the morrow, concerning this question, viz. *Whether baptism and the Lord's supper are seals of the covenant of grace, or of a graceless covenant?* For on this single point turns the whole controversy. And now, may God Almighty, the Father of lights, grant unto thee a discerning mind and a sound judgment, of his infinite mercy, through Jesus Christ. AMEN.

A CAREFUL AND STRICT EXAMINATION

OF THE

EXTERNAL COVENANT,

AND OF THE PRINCIPLES BY WHICH IT IS SUPPORTED:

A REPLY

TO THE REV. MR. MOSES MATHER'S PIECE, ENTITLED,

THE VISIBLE CHURCH IN COVENANT WITH GOD,

FURTHER ILLUSTRATED, &c.

A VINDICATION

OF THE PLAN ON WHICH THE CHURCHES IN NEW-ENGLAND WERE ORIGINALLY FORMED.

INTERSPERSED WITH REMARKS UPON SOME THINGS ADVANCED BY MR. SANDEMAN, ON SOME OF THE IMPORTANT POINTS IN DEBATE.

"I do not mention the administration of sacraments upon this occasion; because, "though they have so noble and effectual a tendency to improve men's minds in "piety, and to promote Christian edification; yet I do not remember to have "heard *of any instance* in which they have been the *means* of men's *conversion*; "which is the less to be wondered at, as they are appointed for a very different "end." DR. DODDRIDGE'S *Sermon on Regeneration.*

PREFACE.

THE design of my writing on the sacramental controversy, has been to vindicate the plan on which the churches in New-England were originally formed, when this country was first settled by our forefathers. And in order to this, I have had it in my view to prove these three propositions, viz.

I. *That those who are qualified to offer their children in baptism, are equally qualified to come to the Lord's table; and* that therefore the *half-way practice* which has so much prevailed of late in the country, is unscriptural.

II. *That baptism and the Lord's supper, are seals of the covenant of grace:* and that therefore those who know they have no grace, cannot be active in sealing of it, consistently with honesty and a good conscience.

III. *That there is no graceless covenant between God and man existing, suited to the state and temper of graceless men, a compliance with which they might, as such, consistently profess and seal:* and that therefore there is no door open for graceless men, as such, to enter into covenant with God. I say, I have had it in my view to prove,

1. That those who are qualified to offer their children in baptism, are equally qualified to come to the Lord's table: and that therefore the half-way practice which of late has so much prevailed in the country, is unscriptural. And this point theoretically considered, seems to be settled. With respect to this, Mr. Mather in his book, entitled, *the Visible Church in covenant with God further illustrated,* &c. says, p. 78. 'As to the half-way practice, I am in it, but not for it. I have no disposition to oppose the doctor in his endeavouring to break up that *unscriptural practice.*' And since those ministers who are in this practice, do grant it to be *unscriptural;* which, so far as I know, all of them do; nothing now remains but to put them in mind, that 'the second commandment requireth the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath appointed in his word.' And the commission of

our Lord and Master obligeth us to teach his disciples to *observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded them.* And how unkind must it be in the people, to necessitate their ministers, to counteract their own consciences, by continuing in *an unscriptural* practice in condescension to their ignorant, unscriptural notions! But much more unkind still must it be in clergymen who know the practice to be unscriptural, to lift up their voices on high, and raise a popular clamour against those ministers who, at no small risk, venture to lay aside the practice, that they may approve themselves to God, and to their own consciences. But it may be said to Mr. Mather's honour, that he is not of the number of those who act so unkind a part to honest men [p].

2. Another point I undertook to prove, was this, viz. That baptism and the Lord's supper are seals of the covenant of grace. This was one chief point I had in view in my answer to Mr. M.'s former book on this controversy. And this point also Mr. M. expressly grants me in his second book. P. 58.

p Our forefathers began to settle in New-England in 1620,—without the half-way practice. It was brought in 1662, forty years after; when the first generation were generally dead, by a synod at Boston. This synod professed to believe that none had a right to the seals for themselves, or their children, but true believers, and real saints: however, they thought a less degree of grace would qualify for one ordinance, than for the other. And on this principle the half-way practice was introduced. The principle they acted upon is now given up. We are all agreed, that he who is qualified to offer his children in baptism, is equally qualified to come to the Lord's table. And so we are all agreed, that the half-way practice is *unscriptural.* Some feel themselves bound in conscience to make *the Scripture their only rule of faith and practice:* others do not think themselves bound. On this point let the following texts be consulted, Deut. iv. 2. Mat. v. 19. Luke vi. 46. and Chap. xxii. 19. Jam. ii. 10. Mat. xxviii. 20. and ch. xv. 6. Besides, we who are ministers, may do well to consider, that although our congregations, while secure in sin, may be well pleased with an *unscriptural practice,* and with us for continuing in it, against the light of our own consciences; yet, if they should ever be awakened out of their carnal security, if they should ever be converted, our conduct might stand in a shocking point of light, in the view of their consciences.—And yet, from sabbath to sabbath, we pray that the Spirit of God may be poured out, and that sinners may be convinced and converted.—This affair doubtless gives pain to many a heart. What a pity it is, that the clergy have not a heart to unite in what they know to be the true scriptural practice! The honour of Christ and of Christianity are interested in this matter. It ought to be attended to with the utmost seriousness and honesty.

speaking of the covenant with Abraham, he says, 'the covenant of grace was evidently and confessedly contained, set forth, and confirmed, by the particular appointment of circumcision.' But if baptism and the Lord's supper are seals of the covenant of grace, how can those who knowingly reject the covenant of grace in their hearts, seal it with their hands, consistently with honesty and a good conscience? Here it may not be amiss to repeat some of the articles of the creed published in my fourth dialogue, that the reader may judge for himself whether they are true or not. 'I believe that any man who seals any covenant, doth, in and by the act of sealing, declare his compliance with that covenant which he seals: because this is the import of the act of sealing. I believe that it is of the nature of lying, to seal a covenant, with which I do not now, and never did comply in my heart; but rather habitually and constantly reject. Therefore, I believe that a man who knows he has no grace, cannot seal the covenant of grace, honestly and with a good conscience.' It belongs to Mr. Mather, if he means to maintain, that those who know they have no grace, can seal the covenant of grace honestly and with a good conscience, to say how. For as yet he has said nothing on this point. And indeed, we must either give up the import of sealing; or give up the covenant of grace, as the covenant to be sealed; or say that graceless men have some grace, and do in a measure truly and really comply with the covenant of grace, and so have really a title to pardon and eternal life, or we cannot be consistent: nor then neither. For to say, that graceless men have some grace, is a contradiction. And to say they have no grace, and yet may honestly seal the covenant of grace, is to deny the import of sealing; for *sealing a covenant always denotes a present consent of heart to the covenant sealed.* And therefore, to seal a covenant which I reject with my whole heart, is a practical falsehood. But if I do not reject it with my whole heart, I have a degree of true love to it; that is, I have a degree of true grace: and so am in a pardoned and justified state. But still it remains true, that those who know they have no grace, cannot seal the covenant of grace with a good conscience, because it is a practical falsehood. Indeed,

men may be so far gone in wickedness, as to allow themselves in lying to God and man; but their conduct cannot be justified, when, with the assembled universe, they appear before the bar of God. For as has been said, *sealing a covenant always denotes a present consent of heart to the covenant sealed.* In this sense it has always been understood by mankind in their covenants between one another in deeds, in bonds, &c. Sealing denotes a present consent of heart to the contents of the written instrument: and therefore no honest man will seal the written instrument until in heart he consents to the contents of it. And should any man seal a written instrument, and at the same time declare before evidences that at present he did not consent to it, it was *not his free act and deed,* the act of sealing would in its own nature be of no significance. The whole transaction would be perfect trifling. Mr. M. says, p. 65. 'I am very sensible, that the Christian church has always esteemed sealing ordinances as seals of the covenant of grace. On God's part, they are seals to the truth of *the whole revealed will of God.* On our part, they are seals binding us to pay a due regard to the whole revelation. And accordingly, any breach of moral rule or gospel-precept, has been esteemed by the church as a breach of covenant in its members.' He, therefore, who is habitually, totally destitute of that holiness which the law of God requires, and of that repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, to which in the Gospel we are invited, and lives in a total neglect of that religion which flows from the love, repentance, and faith required in the law and Gospel: even he does not consent to the covenant of grace in his heart, in the least degree, but lives habitually, totally, and universally in the breach of it, without ever complying with it in one single act.—And can a man, conscious to himself that this is his character, with a good conscience seal this covenant! Or can a Christian church allow of such hypocrisy!

3. The other point which I designed to prove was this, that there is no graceless covenant between God and man existing; that is, no covenant in which God promises religious privileges and spiritual blessings to graceless men, upon

graceless conditions; i. e. to graceless qualifications, which graceless men, while such, may have: and that, therefore, baptism and the Lord's supper cannot be seals to such a covenant.—And Mr. M. in his preface seems as if he intended to give up this point also: for he calls this graceless covenant 'a graceless phantom:' which is really to grant the whole which I contend for. For this is the very point I meant to prove, viz. the non-existence of such a covenant. For God's covenant requires holiness, and nothing else. And it promises eternal life to those who comply with it. But its blessings are not promised to graceless men, as such, nor to graceless qualifications.

However, if we will read Mr. M.'s book through, we shall see that he is so far from giving up this covenant, as 'a graceless phantom,' that he has exerted himself to the utmost to save this 'graceless phantom' from non-existence. Because, without it, he knows no way in which graceless men, as such, can be admitted into the visible church of Christ. For he does not pretend, that they can make a profession of godliness: yea, he is confident, that none may warrantably make a profession of godliness, unless they have the highest degree of assurance. (p. 79.) There must therefore be a graceless covenant for graceless men, as such; to profess which, requires nothing more, nothing higher, than graceless qualifications as necessary conditions of its blessings; or graceless men, as such, cannot profess a present consent to any covenant at all; and so cannot be admitted as members of the visible church, which he says 'is in covenant with God;' or have a covenant right to covenant blessings. For they who are destitute of the qualifications necessary to a covenant right to covenant blessings, can have no covenant right to them. To say otherwise, is an express contradiction.

The method which in my former piece I took to prove the non-existence of such a graceless covenant as has been described, was, 1. To turn the reader to the covenant with Abraham, the covenant at Sinai and in the plains of Moab, and to the Gospel covenant, that he might see with his own eyes, that these were, each of them, holy covenants, which required a holy faith, a holy love, a holy repentance, a holy obe-

dience; and that those who have these holy qualifications are entitled to eternal life. Nor is there any matter of fact in Scripture plainer than this. So that none of these were that graceless covenant for which Mr. M. contends: which promises its blessings to graceless men, as such. Nor has Mr. M. pointed out one unholy duty in that covenant with Abraham, (Gen. 17.) nor one unholy duty in that covenant at Sinai, or in that covenant in the plains of Moab, or in the Gospel covenant. Nor has he denied, that eternal life is promised to every one who complies with God's covenant, as exhibited in these various ways, at these several times. So that my argument, from the nature of the covenant, as it is to be found in the written instrument, stands unanswered. And let it be remembered, that this argument is conclusive, without determining the nature of holiness, or faith, or repentance, or entering at all into the disputes which subsist between the Calvinists, Arminians, Neonomians, Antinomians, &c. relative to the perfection of the divine law, total depravity, regeneration, &c. &c. For if it be proved that God's covenant, to which God's seals are annexed, promises salvation to those who consent to it, and that there is a certain connexion between a real compliance with it and eternal life, then Mr. M.'s external covenant, to which he says the seals are annexed, which does not promise salvation to those who consent to it, nor establishes any certain connexion between a real compliance with it and eternal life, is essentially different from God's covenant, and so is, strictly speaking, 'a graceless phantom.' But, 2. In order to prove the non-existence of a graceless covenant, I introduced the doctrines of *the perfection of the divine law*, and of *total depravity*, into the argument, as thus, since the divine law requires holiness, and nothing but holiness, and since the unregenerate are totally destitute of the holiness required, there is therefore no covenant existing between God and man, with which the unregenerate, while such, do comply in the least degree. Upon which Mr. M. declares, 'that he is become sensible that our different sentiments in this particular, (terms of communion,) is in a great measure, owing to our thinking differently upon other important points.' And so he has offered to the

public his own scheme of religion, which may be summed up in these eight articles.

1. That self-love is essential to moral agency. And,

2. That this self-love, which is essential to moral agency, is by the divine law required of us as our duty.

3. That this self-love, which is essential to moral agency and our required duty, is in our present guilty state absolutely inconsistent with that love to God which the law originally required of Adam before the fall, and which is still required in the moral law.

4. That our natural total depravity arises merely and only from its being thus inconsistent with this self-love to love God.

5. That in these circumstances it is contrary to the law of God, and so a sinful thing, for us to love God.

6. That our natural total depravity not being of a criminal nature, doth not disqualify us for sealing ordinances; as it entirely ceases to be our duty since the fall, to love that character of God which was exhibited in the law to Adam.

And more especially,

7. That now since the fall we are naturally inclined and disposed, our total depravity notwithstanding, to love the new character of God which is revealed in the Gospel, so that we shall without fail, love it as soon as known, without any new principle of grace. For these things being true, it will follow,

8. That unregenerate sinners, who are awakened and externally reformed, must be considered as being in the temper of their hearts as well affected to the Gospel, did they but know it, as the regenerate; and their religious desires and endeavours as being of the same nature and tendency. And therefore they may enter into covenant with God, and attend sealing ordinances, with as much propriety as the regenerate.

This is the sum and substance of his scheme. And in this scheme of principles we may see the fundamental grounds of his thinking differently from us, in the particular point under consideration, viz. the terms of communion.

The design of the following sheets is, first of all, to review

Mr. M.'s external covenant, to see if its true and real nature can be known; and then to show its inconsistence with the doctrines of the perfection of the divine law, and of total depravity, as held forth in the public formulas approved by the church of Scotland, and by the churches in New-England. After which the leading sentiments of his scheme of religion shall be considered, his mistakes be pointed out, and the opposite truths be briefly stated and proved from the word of God; that the nature of ancient apostolic Christianity may be ascertained from the infallible oracles of truth; to the end that the right road to heaven may be kept open and plain for the direction of awakened sinners, and for the confirmation and comfort of young converts.

INTRODUCTION.

Several phrases explained, and questions stated.

IN order to prevent and cut off all needless disputes, and that the reader may clearly understand the following sheets, the meaning of several phrases shall be explained. Particularly,

1. By a *conditional covenant* is meant, a covenant which promises its blessings upon some certain condition; so that no one can claim a covenant right to its blessings, if destitute of the requisite qualifications.

2. By the *covenant of works* is meant, that covenant which promises eternal life upon condition of perfect obedience, through the appointed time of trial, and threatens eternal death for one transgression.

3. By the *covenant of grace* is meant, that covenant which promises pardon, justification, and eternal life through Jesus Christ, to all who repent and believe the Gospel; i. e. to real saints, and to no others.

4. By a *graceless covenant* is meant, a covenant which promises its blessing to graceless men, as such, on certain conditions, or qualifications, which are professedly graceless, and which may take place in graceless men, while such.

5. By *complying with a covenant* is meant, doing that, or having those qualifications which, according to the tenour of the covenant, entitles to its blessings. Thus, for instance, Adam could not have been said to have complied with the covenant of works which he was under, until he had persevered in perfect obedience, through the whole time of trial. For nothing short of this would have entitled him to a confirmed state of holiness and happiness, i. e. to eternal life; as all grant. And thus a sinner cannot be said to have complied with the covenant of grace, whatever legal terrors he has had, and whatever pains he has taken in religion, until by the first act of saving faith he is united to Jesus Christ; for nothing short of this entitles him to pardon, justification, and eternal life, according to the Gospel. As is written, John iii.

18. 36. *He that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him.* Indeed Mr. M. says, p. 29. 'that no man, short of perfection, can be properly said to have complied with the Gospel.' But our Saviour declares, with great solemnity, John v. 24. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death to life.* So that on the first act of saving faith a sinner becomes entitled to eternal life. (Gal iii. 26. 29.) *For ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* Again, a man may be said to have complied with any supposed graceless covenant, when he has the graceless qualifications to which the blessings of that covenant are promised, but not before. So that if a 'fixed resolution to forsake all known sin, and practise all known duty,' is a requisite qualification to the blessings of this covenant, then no man has a covenant right to the blessings of it until he is 'come to this fixed resolution;' i. e. if there is an external covenant, 'distinct from the covenant of grace,' promising to the visible church all the 'external means of grace, and the strivings of God's holy spirit, in order to render them effectual for salvation,' by which the visible church is constituted. And if this 'fixed resolution is absolutely necessary to church-membership, and so to a title to these promises, then no man has a title to these promises, or' is qualified to be admitted a member of the visible church, until he is, in fact, 'come to this fixed resolution:' but whenever he is 'come to this fixed resolution,' he ought to be considered as having complied with the external covenant; and so as having a covenant right to its blessings. Mr. M. says, (p. 64.) that I have 'a very singular notion about the nature of covenanting; as if it required a present compliance with EVERY thing required by the covenant into which they enter.' This I never said.—But indeed I do think, that it is a contradiction in terms, to say that "a covenant promises certain blessings to those, and to those only, who have certain qualifications; and yet some who have not the required qualifications have a covenant right to the blessings promised."

Nor am I 'singular in this notion,' for all mankind think so too. However, 'that no man short of perfection can be properly said to have complied with the Gospel,' is a very singular notion, indeed; and in effect makes the covenant of works and the covenant of grace precisely one and the same thing. But to proceed,

6. By entering into covenant, and engaging to perform the duties which the covenant requires, a man binds himself to be doing the duties required by the covenant, in the manner in which he engages to do them, as long as the covenant is in force. To say otherwise, is to say that a man binds himself, and yet does not bind himself, which is an express contradiction. Thus the Israelites at Mount Sinai, and in the plains of Moab, bound themselves and their posterity to observe all the rites of the ceremonial law, so long as that should be in force. But when the ceremonial law was abrogated, they were no longer bound to observe its rites. And thus, if Mr. M.'s *external covenant* does in fact, require religious duties to be done in a graceless manner, so long as sinners remain graceless, and no longer; then as soon as ever sinners are converted, they are free from the bonds of this covenant, as much as the Jews were from the ceremonial law, at the resurrection of Christ; and so are *then* at liberty to enter into the covenant of grace, and to engage *to live by faith on the Son of God,* and to be *holy in all manner of conversation, pressing towards* perfection, *the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus:* but *not till then*—agreeable to the apostle's reasoning in Rom. vii. 1, 2, 3. But if this external covenant, which requires duties to be done in a graceless manner, is in fact binding for life; if it is in this sense an *everlasting covenant,* as was the covenant with Abraham, (Gen. 17.) then no man who has entered into it is at liberty, while he lives, to cease performing duties in a graceless manner. *For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then, if while her husband liveth she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no*

adulteress, though she be married to another man. Mr. M. may now take his choice. He may say, that his external covenant, which requires duties to be done in a graceless manner, is binding for life, or it is not. If it is not binding for life, then it is self-evident that it is not *an everlasting covenant,* like that in Gen. 17. If it is binding for life, then he who enters into it binds himself to perfom all duties in a graceless manner as long as he lives. This difficulty against his scheme he has not removed. Nor has he ventured to look it fairly in the face. See p. 30, 31, 32.

7. By an *unconditional covenant* is meant, a covenant which promises its blessings to all whom it respects, without any condition at all; so that no qualification at all, of any kind, is necessary in order to a covenant right to all its blessings. Thus God's covenant with Noah and with his seed, and with every living creature with him, even with the fowl and with every beast of the earth, that *all flesh should no more be cut off by the waters of the flood,* is of the nature of an *unconditional grant,* conveying the promised security to all, without respect to any qualification whatever.

Question 1. Is Mr. M.'s external covenant *conditional,* or *unconditional?* If unconditional, then no qualification whatever is requisite in order to a covenant right to all its blessings. Pagans, Turks, Jews, Deists, Heretics, and the scandalous, have as good a right as such to partake at the Lord's table, as to hear the Gospel preached.——If *conditional,* then,

Question 2. Doth Mr. M.'s external covenant require, as a condition of its blessings, holy exercises of heart, or unholy exercises of heart, or no exercise of heart at all, nothing but external bodily motions, considered as unconnected with any volition? If holy exercises of heart, then no graceless man, as such, hath a right to its blessings. If unholy exercises of heart, then it is a graceless covenant, which he says is 'a graceless phantom.' If no exercise of heart at all, nothing but external, bodily motions; then our hearts have nothing to do with it; and we need not concern ourselves about it; for it is not a thing of a moral nature; and so has no concern in the business of religion.

Had Mr. M. first of all acquired determinate ideas himself, and then given an exact definition of his external covenant, which he has in a public manner been called upon to do, it would have rendered his readers' work easy: but now it is so difficult to know what he means, that even his most learned admirers are not agreed, whether his external covenant is conditional or unconditional. However, let us hear him explain himself.

SECTION I.

The nature of Mr. M.'s external covenant, as stated and explained by himself, under the notion of a conditional covenant.

AS our author has no where particularly enumerated the peculiar privileges and blessings of his external covenant, which those, and those only, are entitled to who are in it; nor particularly stated its conditions; nor so much as let us know with certainty whether it be conditional, or unconditional; so there is no way but to look through both his books, and pick up here and there what we can, in order to determine what he means, and consider it in every point of light in which he sets it.

And first, we shall consider it as *a conditional covenant.* And in this view of it we may observe the following things:

1. In his first book, p. 58. he expressly delares, 'that the external covenant between God and the visible church is distinct from the covenant of grace.' And he speaks of this, as what he had through his whole book been 'endeavouring to establish.' And in his second book, (p. 60—64.) he undertakes to prove this point over again at large; that it is 'of a different tenour,' and made for 'a different purpose,' from that of the covenant of grace. I mention this, because some think that he means the covenant of grace by his external covenant.

2. He affirms over and over, 'that the external covenant has no respect to a gracious state of heart.' And it is a chief

design of both his books to prove this point; that so he may prove that unregenerate, graceless men, as such, may be qualified to enter into it, and may have a covenant right in the sight of God to all it blessings. So that, professedly, no conditions are required, but those which are graceless; no qualifications are requisite, but those which are unholy; for he affirms, that the unregenerate are 'totally depraved,' and in 'a state of enmity against God,' (p. 52.) And that they do not perform 'any truly holy obedience.' (p. 17.) So that his external covenant, if conditional, is a graceless covenant.

But it is conditional, for,

3. He says in his first book, (p. 21.) 'That none but such as profess the Christian religion, and will endeavour to conform their practice to the rules of it, ought to be admitted into the church.' And accordingly, (p. 42, 43, 44.) he insists that the 'disorderly and vicious,' should be debarred. But if it is a conditional covenant, and if it requires merely graceless qualifications as the condition of its privileges, then it is a graceless covenant. For that covenant which promises its blessings to graceless men, on graceless conditions, is a graceless covenant.

4. If Mr. M.'s external covenant promises certain blessings and privileges upon some certain conditions; so as that those who are so and so qualified may be members of the visible church, and no others, then it is of great importance to know precisely what these conditions, what these qualifications are, as otherwise no man can possibly determine whether he hath them, and so whether he may lawfully join with the church, and seal the covenant. And this is more necessary on Mr. M.'s scheme than on any other, because he holds, which we do not, that no man may enter into covenant with God in a public profession of religion, and join with the church, unless he *infallibly knows* that he has the necessary qualifications; unless he is as certain of it as a man called to give evidence in a civil court, is of a fact which he sees, and to the truth of which he can make oath before the civil magistrate. (p. 79.) But if men must be thus certain that they have the requisite qualifications, before they can with a good conscience join with the church, then they must,

in this high sense, be certain what qualifications are requisite. Yea, there are four things, concerning which they must have the same degree of certainty as they have about any fact which they see with their eyes, before they can on his plan with a good conscience join with the church. 1. That the bible is the word of God, because this is the grand charter of all church privileges. 2. That Mr. M.'s external covenant is contained in the bible, and is that on which the visible church is constituted. Because otherwise no man has any right on this plan to join with the church. 3. What qualifications are necessary according to this external covenant to fit them to join with the church and attend sealing ordinances. And then, 4. They must be as certain that they have these qualifications, as that ever they saw the sun.—Now he thinks, that on our scheme, many true saints will be kept back from the Lord's table; but on his scheme, it is evident that no one graceless man, whose conscience is awake, and who knows any thing considerable about his own heart, can join with the church: because there never was, nor will be, any such sinner, who can say that he is as certain of these four things, as he is of a fact which he has seen with his eyes, and of the truth of which he can make oath before the civil magistrate [q].

But at present the only question is this, viz. What are the qualifications which are requisite to full communion in the visible church, according to Mr. M.'s external covenant? The covenant of works requires perfection, as the condition

q Mr. Mather in his preface, says, "I am not so fond of my own judgment, or tenacious of my own practice, but that I stand ready *to give them both up*, when any one shall do the friendly office of setting light before me."—He himself, therefore, cannot swear to the truth of his scheme; he has not "that certain knowledge" of it, that he has "of a particular fact, about which he is called to give an evidence in a civil court." It is only his "prevailing opinion." P. 79. And if his external covenant is a mere human device, his practice upon it is what God hath not required at his hands. He has no warrant to put God's seals to a covenant devised by man. And, according to his scheme, he ought not to act in this affair without absolute certainty. To be consistent, he ought to act no more on his plan, until he is infallibly certain that it his duty. For, to use his own argument, p. 79. "if it being a real duty is that which gives us a real right to act; then it being a known duty is that which gives us a known right." And I may add, "this is a self-evident proposition." But more of this, in Sec. xi.

of its blessings. The covenant of grace requires repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, as the conditions of *its* blessings: but what does Mr. M.'s external graceless covenant require, as the condition of *its* blessings? What qualifications are requisite to bring a man into this covenant, and to give him a right to all the privileges and blessings of it in the sight of God? If this question cannot receive a satisfactory answer on Mr. M.'s scheme, then his scheme can never be practised upon. He gave no satisfactory answer to it in his first book, as was shown in the 6th section of my reply to it. He has now made another attempt to answer this question in his second book. Let us hear his answer, and consider it.

He says, (p. 64.) 'That perfection is expressly required in this external covenant.' What! as a condition of its blessings! as a necessary qualification to full communion in the visible church! which was the only point in hand. If so, then no mere man since the fall might join with the visible church.

He says, (p. 64.) 'This covenant requires the holy obedience of a gracious state.' What! again, I say, as a condition of its blessings! as a necessary qualification to full communion in the visible church! the only point in hand. If so, then no graceless man, as such, can be admitted into the visible church.

He says, (p. 65.) 'This covenant requires the utmost endeavours of the unregenerate.' What! still I repeat it, as a condition of its blessings! as a necessary qualification to full communion in the visible church! the only point in hand. If so, then no unregenerate man, who has not as yet used his utmost endeavours, can, as such, be admitted into the visible church, which will keep out every unregenerate man, because no such unregenerate man ever existed.

Again, having spoken of the convictions, that the unregenerate may have, he says, (p. 65.) 'under these convictions he may come to a fixed resolution to forsake all known sin, and to practise all known duty; set himself to seek an interest in Christ, and to seek needed influences of divine grace. And he may confirm these resolutions upon his own

soul, by a solemn covenant dedication of himself to God; engaging by divine assistance to obey the whole will of God, one particular of which is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. And I will add, that he may confirm this covenant between God and his own soul by Gospel seals. It cannot be denied that the natural powers of our souls do render us capable of such covenanting with God. And the only question is, whether God has required this of sinners? This is the question in dispute.' Upon which the following observations may be made:

1. Was this the covenant in Gen. xvii.? Was Abraham 'under conviction?' 'Had he come to such unregenerate fixed resolutions?' Did he bind himself in some future time to believe? No, just the reverse. Abraham had been converted above twenty years before this transaction, (Gen. xvii.) and had both believed, and obeyed, in a saving manner, through all this period. So that 'the question in dispute,' is not, whether Abraham entered into this covenant in Gen. xvii.; for Mr. M. does not pretend he did. And therefore the covenant with Abraham, (Gen. xvii.) and this covenant of Mr. M.'s, are not the same, but very different. His external covenant, therefore, is, as he declares, 'distinct from the covenant of grace,' and 'of a different tenour,' and for 'a different purpose.' For nothing was more remote from Abraham's mind, than to enter into covenant, and bind himself to a course of unregenerate duties, in order to obtain converting grace. 'Of this there is no dispute.' So that 'this is NOT the question in dispute,' whether Mr. M.'s external covenant is the same with that covenant into which Abraham personally entered, (Gen. xvii.) Where then in all the bible will Mr. M. find his external covenant, as above defined? For no such covenant was ever exhibited by the God of Israel. Besides,

2. It may be inquired, what does Mr. M. mean by 'engaging to obey the whole will of God?' For, 1. Does he mean, that men who know they have no grace when they join with the church do covenant and promise that they will from that time and forward, as long as they live, *be perfectly holy?* and so in fact 'obey the whole will of God?' But

this is to promise to do what they infallibly know they shall not do; which is a piece of scandalous immorality: for such promises are no better than wilful lies. And this therefore cannot be the thing he means. Or, 2. does he mean, that a sinner under conviction enters into covenant with God that he will in fact repent and believe the moment he joins with the church, and from that time and forward, as long he lives, persevere in a life of faith and holiness, pressing forward toward perfection? But this, again, is not much better than wilful lying. For it is to promise that which he has no sufficient reason to expect that he shall do, as he has no heart to do it, and no title to 'the divine assistance,' to give him a heart to do it. And, besides, if he expected to be converted so soon, he might wait only one week longer, and so be converted before the next sabbath; and thus put an end to all controversy about the affair. This therefore I suppose is what no awakened sinner ever meant when he joined with the church; and what Mr. M. would not have them to mean. And therefore, 3. All that awakened sinners can mean, or that Mr. M. can be supposed to intend that they should mean, when they 'engage to obey the whole will of God,' is no more than that they should 'endeavour to do it;' as he expressed himself in the first book, p. 21. 'And I will allow that none but such as profess the Christian religion, and will *endeavour* to conform their practice to the rules of it, ought to be admitted into the church.' And if this be his meaning, why did not Mr. M. answer the questions which were put to him in my former piece? (p. 171.) 'But pray how much must they endeavour?' &c. &c. And besides, if all they mean is to bind themselves to unregenerate, unholy graceless duties and endeavours, then it will follow, that these graceless duties, according to Mr. M. are the 'whole will of God;' for they engage 'to obey the whole will of God;' and, on the present hypothesis, unregenerate duties are all they engage. And therefore these unregenerate duties are all that God requires of them. But will Mr. M. say this? No, by no means. For he expressly declares, (p. 27.) 'nothing short of perfection may be looked upon as the whole of what is required.' What then does Mr. M. mean? In his Preface,

he says, 'I have endeavoured, both in this and in my former piece, 'to set my sentiments in a plain and intelligible light.' We believe he has 'endeavoured' to do it, but yet he has not done it. For no consistent meaning can be put upon his words. But,

3. Perhaps it will be said, that Mr. M. has with great plainness exactly stated the requisite qualifications for church-membership, in these words, "a fixed resolution to forsake all known sin, and practise all known duty," if we only understand his words in their plain common literal meaning. But is this his meaning? or will he stand to it? For, 1. The candidate for admission is to come to a fixed resolution to forsake "all known sin." But enmity to God, impenitence, and unbelief, are "known sins," as all acknowledge, but gross Antinomians. 2. And to practise "all known duty." But to repent and believe the Gospel, to love God and our neighbour, to lead lives of universal holiness, are "known duties." For all who profess to believe the bible to be the word of God, do in fact acknowledge these to be duties indispensibly required of all the disciples of Christ; yea, of all to whom the Gospel comes; gross Antinomians excepted. To be sure, our Saviour affirms, that *no man can be his disciple unless he doth deny himself, take up his cross, and follow him.* And, 3. The candidate for admission into the visible Church, is to come to "a fixed resolution" to do all this; to a resolution which is 'fixed,' in opposition to one that is *unfixed;* so that his *goodness shall not be like the morning cloud and early dew, which quickly passeth away;* or like the stony and thorny ground hearers in the parable, (Mat. 3.) All whose religion came to nothing, because their resolutions were not 'fixed.' Now will Mr. M. stand to this, that none ought to be admitted into the visible church, but those who are thus, in deed and in truth, 'come to a fixed resolution to forsake all known sin, and practise all known duty?' And who are so infallibly certain that they are come to this 'fixed resolution,' that they could give oath to it, with the same assurance as they could to any matter of fact which they see with their eyes? Without which assurance, according to him, no one can with a good conscience make a public profession

of religion, and enter into covenant with God. p. 79. If he will, every unregenerate man in the world will be secluded, as will appear before we have done.

Look through the bible, and you will find no class of unregenerate men so very self-conceited, as to be habitually confident, that they have 'a fixed resolution to forsake all known sin, and practise all known duty,' but the Pharisees. They could say, *All these things have I done from my youth up*: and, *lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment.* And the very reason and ground of their confidence was their ignorance of the true nature of the divine law. As it is written, *for without the law sin was dead. And so I was alive without the law once.* For every sinner who knows himself to be unregenerate, under genuine conviction, knows that he is *under the dominion of sin, dead in sin,* having no heart to repent, and forsake "all known sin," and to turn to God, and to the practice of "all known duty." For in this unregeneracy consists, viz. in having *no heart to turn from sin to God.* And even every sinner who is only a little orthodox in his head, knows that, according to scripture, the resolutions and religion of unregenerate sinners, instead of being "fixed," is like that of *the stony and thorny ground hearers;* and like *the morning cloud and the early dew, which quickly passeth away.* Besides, the Pharisees really thought that they were godly men. So that indeed there is not one single instance of a man in scripture, who, knowing himself to be unregenerate, yet thought himself, as such, to come to such a 'fixed resolution;' much less, that was 'infallibly certain' of it.

But to be more particular:

If none may be admitted into the visible church, but those who are come to this 'fixed resolution,' and who are quite certain that their resolution is 'fixed,' then what will Mr. M. do with infants? For, according to this rule, if his own reasoning is conclusive, when disputing against us, all infants ought to be secluded. For we have no evidence concerning any one in particular, that it is come to this 'fixed resolution.' For thus he reasons against us, in his first book, (p. 15.) 'None can suppose, that every male among Abra-

ham's seed, in all succeeding generations, were truly gracious by the time they were eight days old.' And in his second book, p. 63. he says, 'nor can the proof of it, which I before offered, be evaded, without asserting that Abraham had sufficient grounds for a rational judgment of charity, that all his seed would be in a gracious state by the time they were eight days old.' This he says, in order to prove that saving grace is not a necessary qualification to church-membership, even in the adult. And it equally proves, that such a 'fixed resolution' is not necessary. 'For none can suppose, that every male among Abraham's seed in all succeeding generations, were come to this fixed resolution by the time they were eight days old.' But, as he adds, p. 63. 'there was an express command to confirm the covenant with them at the age of eight days; which is an incontestible evidence, that a gracious state,' and not that such a 'fixed resolution,' 'was considered as necessary in order to their being taken into covenant, and becoming complete members of the visible church.'

Again, this rule of admission into the visible church laid down by Mr. M. must, according to his own way of reasoning, have secluded in a manner the whole congregation of Israel, who entered into covenant at Mount Sinai: for they were not come to this 'fixed resolution to forsake all known sin.' For he observes, p. 71. 'How soon did they corrupt themselves, when Moses was gone up into the mount,' and fell into that 'known sin' of idolatry. And therefore, to use his own words, and to turn his own reasoning against himself, p. 71. "It is beyond the utmost stretch of charity, to suppose that the people who then entered into covenant,' were come to 'a fixed resolution to forsake all known sin.' Indeed, it is certain they were not. And therefore it is certain, according to Mr. M.'s way of reasoning, that such a fixed resolution was 'not respected' in the external covenant, as a necessary qualification: much less, an infallible certainty that they had it. And this consequence he seems to have been aware of, when he said, p. 71. 'no, it is plain God proceeded to take them into covenant BY MERE SOVEREIGNTY; even as in his covenant

with Abraham he included his infant seed.' And so again, speaking of the Israelites' covenanting in the plains of Moab, he says, p. 72, 73. 'By ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGNTY, God extends this covenant, and this oath, even to such whose consent to it was not so much as asked; and as the consent to this covenant was not so much as asked of some that were taken into it, it is abundantly evident that they were not taken into it, as gracious persons.' And we may add, that it is equally evident that they were not taken in as persons 'come to a fixed resolution to forsake all known sin, and to practise all known duty.'—And thus we see Mr. M. if his reasoning is conclusive, has confuted his own scheme, and has proved that his external covenant, which requires such 'fixed resolutions,' in order to enter into covenant with God, was not the covenant on which the visible church was constituted. And he has found out a *new way* never before heard of, of taking the adult 'into covenant,' without asking their consent, by mere 'sovereignty;' even as infants are taken in, without respect to any qualification in them whatsoever. Because it is said in Deut. 29. *Neither with you only do I make this covenant,* &c. *but also with him that is not here.* Just as it is among us, when a minister is ordained, and some of the members of the church are necessarily absent on the ordination day, the covenant between the pastor and the church is made with the whole church, the consent of the absent members being taken for granted. Or else these words have respect to those who were then unborn, even to all future generations, who were comprised in that covenant, just as infants were. But to return,

Mr. M. so far forgets himself as entirely to give up, not only the necessity of such 'a fixed resolution,' but of any qualification whatsoever; and even expressly declares, that his external covenant is *absolute* and *unconditional,* and that herein it differs from the covenant-grace. p. 60, 61, 62. But if his external covenant is merely an absolute and unconditional grant of certain privileges and blessings; then since the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile is removed by Christ, it gives the whole Gentile world as much right to the Lord's table, as to the word preached, without respect to any qualifi-

cation whatever. For a Pagan, a Turk, or a Jew, while such, have a right to hear the Gospel preached, for the grant is unconditional. *Go preach the Gospel to every creature.* And if all the privileges of the visible church of Christ were made as common, by a grant equally unconditional, a Pagan, a Turk, or a Jew, would have, as such, as good a right to baptism and the Lord's table, as to hear the Gospel preached. So now the visible church of Christ becomes invisible, being absorbed and swallowed up in the world, without any mark of distinction, according to Mr. M. . .

It may be observed that our author says, that in my former piece I have 'wholly misrepresented his sentiments,' and given his scheme the 'bad name of a graceless covenant.' And if he all along meant that his external covenant was a mere absloute, unconditional grant, which has 'no respect to a gracious state of heart,' nor to any other qualification whatever, then I own I have 'wholly misrepresented his sentiments' in my former piece. But then he ought as frankly to own, that he has in his former piece 'wholly misrepresented' them also: and that he has carried on the same misrepresentation in this second book, in which he speaks of his external covenant, not as a mere unconditional grant, but as a mutual covenant between God and the visible church, which is to be entered into by us, and sealed on our part; in order to which, some qualifications are absolutely necessary on our side, viz. that we "come to a fixed resolution to forsake all known sin, and practise all known duty." But I submit it to the judgment of the judicious candid reader, whether the truth of the case is not this, that Mr. M. himself does not distinctly know what his external covenant is; and however ingenious he may be, yet it is beyond his abilities to give a consistent account of this creature of his own imagination. For let his external covenant be conditional, or unconditional, it is merely a creature of his own imagination. For if it is conditional, the conditions of it are merely unholy, graceless duties; and so it is a graceless covenant, which is a 'graceless phantom,' as was proved in my former piece. And if it is unconditional, it wholly destroys the visible church, as it leaves no mark of distinction between the church and the

world. And Philip had no right to say, *If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest*; for believe, or not believe, he had an equal right to baptism. And so baptism must cease to be an external badge of a Christian. Let a Pagan Indian, merely that he may be in the fashion, demand baptism for himself and his children, and unqualified as he is, we have no right to refuse him; for he has the same right to baptism as to hear the Gospel preached. But that the covenant with Abraham was really the covenant of grace, which Mr. M. owns is a conditional covenant, I have proved in my former piece. But let us hear Mr. M. speak for himself.

SECTION II.

Mr. M.'s external covenant, represented by him as an unconditional covenant, examined in this view of it.

OUR author says, (p. 59, 60, 61, 62.) 'Whoever reads that covenant with Abraham, recorded Gen. xvii. with attention, must unavoidably see,' N. B. 'That although the covenant of grace is set forth in it;' for he says, (page 57.) 'the covenant of grace was contained in every dispensation of God to mankind; each of them contained promises of eternal salvation to believers.' But to proceed: 'Yet that covenant, as then made with Abraham, was not strictly the covenant of grace.' I grant, that besides pardon, grace, and glory, temporal good things were promised in that covenant. And so they are under the Gospel. Mat vi. 33. But God's fatherly care of believers in the world is one of the blessings of the covenant of grace, in the strictest sense. But this is not the thing. Mr. M. has respect to the nature of the promise, which being unconditional, is inconsistent with the covenant of grace; and therefore cannot be reconciled to it, the blessings of which are promised only *conditionally if we believe*; but the blessings of this covenant in Gen. xvii. are promised unconditionally, *believe or not believe*. For thus Mr. M. says, 'it has some peculiarities which are not reconcileable

with it.' And this appears from that 'chief promise contained in the covenant: *And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee.*' But, pray, why is not this 'chief promise reconcileable' with the covenant of grace? This is the reason Mr. M. gives, because 'this promise is as full, as express, as absolute and unconditional to his seed, as it was to Abraham.' Nay, but the apostle Paul, when preaching pure Gospel, said to the jailor, *believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.* Acts xvi. 30. So that the promise was as full, and express, to his seed, as it was to the jailor himself. But Mr. M. will say, that this promise to the jailor and his house was conditional; but the promise to Abraham and his seed was 'absolute and unconditional.' And this being so, it not only is not the covenant of grace, but it cannot be 'reconciled' with it. I believe Mr. M.'s external covenant is in its very nature so inconsistent with the covenant of grace, that it cannot be 'reconciled' with it. But the whole Christian world, the Anabaptists excepted, have till now thought that the covenant with Abraham was the very covenant of grace itself. But it seems, it is so inconsistent with it, in Mr. M.'s view of it, as 'not to be reconcileable with it,' because the covenant of grace promises the heavenly Canaan to us and to our seed, and that God will be a God to us, and them conditionally, if we and they believe; but the covenant in Gen. xvii. promised the earthly Canaan, and that God would be a God to Abraham and his seed 'unconditionly.'

But Mr. M. goes on:

'This difference between the tenour of the covenant of grace and the covenant with Abraham, could not escape the Dr.'s notice; but being resolved to make out his scheme, he puts in a supplement into the covenant, which has not the least countenance from the covenant itself, or from any other place in the bible. p. 65. *God speaks to the pious parent in that ordinance, (baptism,) saying, I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed, i. e.* IF THEY WILL TAKE HEED TO WALK IN MY WAYS. This last conditional clause, is a mere arbitrary addi-

tion to the covenant with Abraham, invented only for the sake of making that reconcileable to the covenant of grace. But no such clause is ever once represented as belonging to the covenant of grace, or to the covenant with Abraham.' To which we reply, that,

The assembly of divines, in their *larger catechism*, say, that 'the covenant of grace was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in him with all the elect, as his seed.' And yet, in order to enjoy the blessings of this covenant, it was necessary, on Christ's part, that *he should make his soul an offering for sin*; and on our part, that we should become Christ's seed by a true and living faith. If Christ had not died, or if we do not believe in him, God had not been obliged by covenant to make him *heir of all things*, or us to be *joint heirs with him*. So the covenant of grace in a shadow, was made with Abraham, who was a type of Christ, and with all his seed. And yet, in order to enjoy the blessings of this covenant, it was necessary that Abraham should renounce idolatry, and separate himself from an idolatrous world, and *walk before God, and be perfect*, in the sense in which good men are said in Scripture to *be perfect*. Gen. vi. 4. Job i. 1. And that he should *command his children and his household after him* to follow his example. This was necessary on Abraham's part. And it was necessary that his seed should *keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord MIGHT bring upon Abraham that which he had spoken.* Gen. xviii. 19. If Abraham on the divine call had refused to leave *Ur of the Chaldees*, and to take Jehovah for his God; or had he afterwards returned to his native country and to his false gods, and persisted in idolatry, he would not have been made the *heir of the holy land*, the type of the heavenly inheritance. If his seed had finally refused to leave Egypt, and to give up the gods of Egypt, and to follow the Lord to the holy land, God would not have been obliged by covenant to give them the enjoyment of it. Therefore, although the covenant with Abraham, (Gen. xvii.) was expressed in the form of an absolute and unconditional promise, to him and to his seed; yet it is manifest, that conditions were implied, both with respect to him and to them.

And in this view of the Abrahamic covenant, as a conditional covenant, the divine conduct can be justified, in swearing, concerning that generation whose carcasses fell in the wilderness, that they should never *enter into his rest;* because they did not *believe his word,* nor *obey his voice,* as their father Abraham had done. *So they could not enter, because of unbelief.* Whereas had God been obliged, by an absolute, unconditional promise, to bring them into the land of Canaan, he had been, what they were ready to charge him with, really guilty of *a breach of covenant.*

And in this view of the Abrahamic covenant, as a conditional covenant, the conduct of Moses can be justified in that speech of his to the two tribes and half tribe, in Num. xxxii. 6—15. Wherein he expressly declares, that if *they should turn away from the Lord,* as their fathers had done, whose carcasses were fallen in the wilderness, they would be destroyed themselves, and be the means of destroying all the congregation. *For if ye turn away from after him, he will yet again leave them in the wilderness, and ye shall destroy all this people.* Whereas, had God been obliged, by an absolute, unconditional promise, to bring them into the holy land, and put them in actual possession of it, there could have been no more danger of their destruction, than there is that the earth will be destroyed by a second general deluge, notwithstand- God's covenant with Noah. Gen. viii. 11, 12. See also Deut. vii. 12.

And in this view of the Abrahamic covenant, as a conditional covenant, the divine conduct can be justified in the present rejection of the seed of Abraham, who have been cast off 1700 years, notwithstanding God had said, *I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, for an EVERLASTING covenant:* for *because of unbelief they were broken off.* For there is no standing in God's church but by faith. As it is written relative to the Gentile converts, who had been grafted into the good olive, *and thou standest by faith.* Rom. xi. 20. For God might consistently reject the seed of Abraham, if they refused to walk in the steps of Abraham, provided they were taken into covenant in this view. But if God had taken them without any proviso,

and absolutely and unconditionally engaged to be their God in an *everlasting covenant*, so far as I am able to discern, he would have been obliged to keep them for his covenant people, notwithstanding their rejecting the Messiah by unbelief.

But as Mr. M. is so confident that the Abrahamic covenant was *absolute* and *unconditional* to him and to all his seed, and that all the blessings comprised in that chief promise of it, *I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed*, were made sure to them without this 'conditional clause,' *if they will take heed to walk in my ways*, which he says, 'is a mere arbitrary addition to the covenant with Abraham, invented only for the sake of making that reconcileable with the covenant of grace:' therefore it may not be amiss to stop a few minutes, and take a view of some of the consequences which will unavoidably follow from his notion of this covenant, and from his manner of reasoning in support of it.

1. If the covenant with Abraham is 'unconditional,' and so 'not reconcileable' with the covenant of grace; then the covenant of grace was not 'contained' in it; unless it 'contained' in it something not 'reconcileable' with itself: i. e. unless two covenants were contained in that one covenant, in their own nature so inconsistent as not to be 'reconcileable' to each other. The Abrahamic covenant is 'absolute and unconditional,' and therefore it is not the covenant of grace, says Mr. M. And he may as well say, *therefore the covenant of grace is not implied in it at all*, nor in any sense whatever, 'set forth' in it. For nothing is 'contained,' or 'set forth' in it, which is neither expressed nor implied. But the covenant of grace is neither expressed, nor implied; because there is no condition expressed nor implied. Thus Mr. M. has secluded and wholly shut the covenant of grace out of the Abrahamic covenant. For to shut out all conditions, is to shut out all conditional covenants. But,

2. If the covenant of grace was not implied in that covenant with Abraham in Gen. xvii. because that implied no condition, but was absolute and unconditional to him and to his seed; then for the same reason the covenant of grace was not implied in the covenant with Abraham in Gen. xii. and in Gen. xiii. and in Gen. xv. For in each of these, (which

are all) the places, the promises are to Abraham and to his seed, and are delivered in the form of absolute and unconditional promises, exactly, precisely after the same tenour of the covenant in Gen. xvii. Pray, reader, stop here, take your bible, turn to the cited chapters, and see with your own eyes. And when you have read these chapters, then,

3. Turn to the first promise made by God after the fall, Gen. iii. *The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.* And see, and consider, that this also was in the form of an 'absolute, unconditional' promise, and respected their posterity as much as it did Adam and Eve. Therefore, by parity of reason, Mr. M. must say, that it was not the covenant of grace, nor 'reconcileable' to it. And,

4. To say, that any conditions are implied, if Mr. M.'s way of reasoning is just, 'is a mere arbitrary addition to the covenant' with Adam and with Abraham, 'invented only for the sake of making it out,' that there never was any covenant of grace at all, from the beginning of the world to the days of Abraham. For no 'conditional clause' is ever once expressly inserted in the covenant with Adam or with Abraham, from the first revelation of it, until that in Gen. xvii. And therefore, if Mr. M.'s reasoning is just, there was no covenant of grace exhibited in all this period of two thousand years. And therefore,

5. As the covenant of grace, if these things are true, never had been revealed, from the beginning of the world to that transaction in Gen. xvii.; and as that was not the covenant of grace, nor 'reconcileable to it,' so circumcision, which was appointed as a seal of that covenant in Gen. xvii. and of no other, was not appointed to be a seal of the covenant of grace in any sense whatever. For at that day no covenant of grace had ever been exhibited. For every promise, which had been made to Adam, or to Abraham, was as absolute and unconditional as that in Gen. xvii. and respected their seed as much as themselves. And therefore,

6. Circumcision not being, in fact, in its original intention, a seal of the covenant of grace, the apostle Paul considering it as such in Rom. iv. cannot make it such. It is true, he calls it *a seal of the righteousness of the faith*, and goes about

to illustrate and confirm his doctrine of justification by faith, a doctrine peculiar to the covenant of grace, from God's dispensations to Abraham; and even goes so far as to say, in so many words, that *the Gospel was preached to Abraham*; but if Mr. M. is right, in all this he was mistaken. The covenant with Abraham was not the Gospel, was not the covenant of grace, nor indeed 'reconcileable to it.' Its seal, therefore, was not the seal of the covenant of grace: it was not *a seal of the righteousness of the faith*. For the covenant of grace is 'conditional,' and 'wholly a personal affair;' but the covenant with Abraham was 'unconditional,' and made the 'seed joint-heirs with the parent.'—Therefore, if these things are so, it will follow,

7. That the visible church originally was set up before any covenant of grace existed, upon a covenant 'of a different tenour,' and 'for a different purpose.' And as the visible church is the same now, under the Gospel dispensation, as it was under the Abrahamic, it must be considered as containing the same thing still,—a visible church built on an external, unconditional covenant. And,

8. As the visible church is thus founded merely and only on this unconditional covenant, so no qualifications at all are requisite in order to our being complete members of it, in good standing, even in the sight of God. Yea, we may be taken in 'without our consent,' even in adult age. And to use Mr. M.'s own words respecting the Israelites at Mount Sinai, in application to the whole Christian world, Papists and Protestants, Arians, Pelagians, Socinians, Arminians, Antinomians, Drunkards, Adulterers Thieves, Liars, &c. &c. p. 71.; 'it is plain, God has proceeded to take us all into covenant, by mere sovereignty, even as in his covenant with Abraham he included his infant seed;' no more respect being had to any qualification whatever, in the adult, than in infants of eight days old. And therefore,

9. All our churches in New-England are wrong, even every one of them, essentially wrong; and Mr. M.'s among the rest, in obliging our people, even such as have been baptised in infancy, to make a profession of their faith, and to give their consent to some covenant or other, requiring either gra-

cious, or graceless obedience: for neither the one nor the other is requisite to full communion in the visible church, because that is founded on an unconditional covenant, which requires no qualifications at all of the adult any more than of infants eight days old. And therefore,

10. As on this unconditional covenant no qualifications whatever are requisite to a complete standing in the visible church; so by necessary consequence, no crimes, how gross soever, can constitutionally expose any one to excommunication, or to be debarred from church privileges. For, if any crime whatever could regularly expose one to excommunication, then a freedom at least, from that crime, would be a qualification absolutely necessary in order to a complete standing in the visible church; which would suppose, that the church was not founded on a covenant absolutely unconditional.

If, therefore, we will come into Mr. M.'s external covenant, considered as an unconditional covenant, unless we are inconsistent with ourselves, we must give in to all these necessary consequences; and so excommunicate even excommunication itself out of the Christian world, and fling open the doors of the church to all comers, how heretical and vicious soever they be.

But, on the other hand, if we consider the covenant with Abraham, in Gen. xvii. as the covenant of grace, and so implying the conditions of that covenant, as St. Paul did, as was proved in my former piece, then not one difficulty will lie in our way. That objection relative to infants, and that relative to the Sinai covenant, and to the covenant in the plains of Moab, were answered in my former piece, in Sec. vii. and nothing *new* is offered by Mr. M. but what is obviated at first sight, only granting a condition to be understood in the covenant, in Gen. xvii. though not expressed. And we must be obliged to grant this with respect to every exhibition of the covenant of grace, from the beginning of the world to that day, all which were delivered in the form of absolute unconditional promises: or else be driven to the dire necessity of saying, that from the beginning of the world to that day, no covenant of grace had ever been revealed.

Thus we have finished what is needful, on Mr. M.'s external covenant, considered as an unconditional covenant. Should any say that it is certain, that Mr. M. cannot intend that his external covenant should be an unconditional one, the reply is ready, viz. That it is certain that no man can tell by what he has published, what he does mean. But granting he meant, as for my part I understood him to mean when I wrote my answer to his first book, that his external covenant should be a conditional covenant; then the conditions are *gracious* or *graceless*. If *gracious*, then no graceless man, as such, can be admitted into the visible church. If *graceless*, then his external covenant is a *graceless covenant*. This is its nature, and by this name it ought to be called, to the end its name may point out its nature, and distinguish it from every other covenant.

Indeed, it must be granted, that every man has a right to give a name to his own child. And Mr. M. has given a name to his covenant; he has called it *the external covenant*: but perhaps on reconsideration he may think that there is no propriety in giving it this name. 1. Because his covenant consists not in *externals* only, but also in *internals*, viz. in 'a fixed resolution' to forsake all known sin, and practise all known duty: for 'a fixed resolution' is an internal thing, as much as saving grace. 2. Because this name does not at all distinguish it from the covenant of works, or covenant of grace, which are both of them external covenants, as much as is his covenant. But it is the design of different names, to distinguish things of different natures. The covenant of works was an external covenant, as it was administered to Adam, 'peculiarly worded to suit his circumstances.' p. 67. There was no internal duty expressly required. The only sin expressly forbidden, was an external one, viz. *Of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat.* Eating is an external act; and this was the only action expressly mentioned in the covenant of works, as it was administered to Adam. There is therefore much more propriety in calling that an external covenant, than there is in calling Mr. M.'s covenant by this name. And so the covenant of grace, as it is administered in the Gospel, free from the shadows, rites,

and ceremonies of the old dispensation, is as external a covenant as Mr. Mather's. For it requires that we not only *believe in our hearts*, but also *confess with our mouths*; that we not only *believe*, but also are *baptised* and attend the Lord's supper, *doing this in remembrance of him*. Yea, the Gospel requires of professors all external duties to God and man; and particularly, every external duty relative to church order, with much greater plainness than did the Old Testament; and even descends so low, as to require church members to *work with their hands*. The name of an external covenant, therefore, is not at all adapted to distinguish Mr. M.'s covenant from the covenant of works, or from the covenant of grace. And yet what he means is really and essentially different from both. For they both require holiness, and nothing else, as qualifications to the enjoyment of the blessings promised in both. But this covenant requires no holiness at all to qualify for the enjoyment of all its peculiar blessings. It requires to this end nothing but graceless duties. The name, therefore, of a graceless covenant, is the most natural, expressive, and distinguishing name in the world. Mr. M. seems to think, that it might do to call it by the name of '*the externals of the covenant of grace*.' But I think this name by no means will do. For the faith and obedience of the covenant of grace is a holy faith and obedience. In order therefore for any faith and obedience to be *the externals of the covenant of grace*, they must be *professedly and to appearance*, a holy faith and obedience. But the faith and obedience of Mr. M.'s covenant, requisite to a title to all its blessings, are professedly such as a graceless man may have, which is professedly a graceless faith and obedience. For he affirms, that all unregenerate sinners are 'totally depraved.' Again, Mr. M. although in his former book he had said, p. 7. that 'after my most careful inquiry, I must own myself at a loss in determining what they' (protestant divines in general) 'mean, by *being under the external administration of the covenant of grace*:' yet now in his second book, p. 61. he is even willing, if this would give content, to call his covenant by the name of the external administration of the covenant of grace.' But this is a very improper name: for when he

takes a man into the church and administers the covenant, the covenant which he administers to the man, is not the covenant of grace, but professedly 'a covenant distinct from the covenant of grace.' It ought, therefore, by no means, to be called *the external administration of the covenant of grace.* However, it may with no small propriety be called, *the external administration of a graceless covenant.*

Objection. The external covenant ought not to be called a graceless covenant, because it is designed as a means of the conversion of sinners; and tends in its own nature to promote their conversion.

Answer. The external covenant in its own nature does not tend to promote the conversion of sinners, but the contrary; for sinners are never converted without conviction of sin: for there can be no sound conversion without true repentance. And there can be no true repentance without true conviction of sin. But there can be no true conviction of sin, without a knowledge of the true rule of duty. And the law of God, which requires holiness, and nothing but holiness, is the only rule of duty that God ever gave to man: by this *law is the knowledge of sin.* This *law is the school-master,* which God has appointed *to bring us to Christ.* Now to send us to school to another school-master than that which God has appointed, tends not to our conversion, but to our delusion. But Mr. M.'s external covenant is another school-master than that which God has appointed, essentially different from it, and in its own nature inconsistent with it.

SECTION III.

The perfection of the divine law, and total depravity, inconsistent with the notion of an external covenant appointed by God for the unregenerate, as such, to enter into, requiring graceless qualifications, and nothing else, as the conditions of its blessings.

A LAW, which is a universal rule of life, to saints and to sinners, extending to the whole of our moral conduct, at all times, which forbids all sin, and requires us to be holy as God is holy, is inconsistent with any law, or rule, or covenant, which requires any sin, in matter or manner, at any time, of any man, saint, or sinner, on any pretence whatsoever. If, therefore, God has given such a holy law as above, he cannot be the author of such an unholy covenant. For it is written, Jam. iii. 11. *Doth a fountain send forth, at the same place, sweet water and bitter?* And again it is written, Jam. i. 13. *Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.* But for God to require sin, and bind his creatures by a most solemn covenant to sin, and promise them peculiar blessings if they will sin, in the manner his covenant requires, is tempting to sin in a most powerful manner, with great and strong temptations. But,

1. As to the *perfection of the divine law*, the assembly of divines at Westminster say, 'That the law is perfect, and bindeth every one to a full conformity in the whole man unto the righteousness thereof, and unto entire obedience FOREVER; so as to require the utmost perfection of every duty, and to forbid the least degree of every sin.' *Larger Cat.* in answer to Q. 99, proved by Psalm. xix. 7. Jam. ii. 10. Mat v. 21—48.

2. As to total depravity, they say, 'The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consisteth in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of that righteousness wherein he was created, and the corruption of his nature; whereby he is utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite unto all that is spiritually good: and wholly inclined to all evil, and that conti-

nually; which is commonly called original sin, and from which do proceed all actual transgressions. Rom. v. 12—19. and iii. 10—19. Eph. ii. 1, 2, 3. Rom. v. 6. and viii. 7, 8. Gen. vi. 5. Jam. i. 14, 15. Mat. xv. 19.' Answ. to Q. 25.

As to the *doings of the unregenerate*, they say, 'works done by unregenerate men, although for the matter of them they may be things which God commands, and of good use both to themselves and others; yet, because they proceeded not from a heart purified by faith, nor are done in a right manner according to the word, nor to a right end, the glory of God, they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God. And yet their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing to God. 1 Cor. xiii. 3. Isai. i. 12, &c. *Conf. faith*, chap. 16. To which agree *the* 39 *articles of the Church of England* 'Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his spirit, are not pleasant to God, &c. Yea, rather, for that they are not done as God hath commanded and willed them to be done, we doubt not but that they have the nature of sin.' *Article* 13. To which also agrees Mr. Stoddard. 'If men do not act from gracious motives and for gracious ends, they do not the thing that God commands; there is no obedience to God in what they do; they don't attend the will of God.' *Nature of conversion*, p. 7. Yea, he adds, (p. 9.) 'There is an *opposition between saving grace and common grace*. If one be opposite to the other, then they differ specifically. Those dispositions that have contrariety one to the other, that are at war one with the other, and would destroy one another, are not of the same kind: and truly these are so. Common graces are lusts, and do oppose saving grace.' So again in his Safety, (3d. edit.) p. 106. 'Man in his natural state is *an enemy to this the gospel-way of salvation*. As man is an enemy to the law of God, so to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.' And in p. 146. 'All those religious frames and dispositions that are in natural men, are nothing else but the various shapings of self-love.' And again, p. 148. 'Self-love is the very root of original sin.' And again, p. 162. 'Every unhumbled sinner is striving against the work of humiliation: They are opposing of it, either by endeavours to set up a

righteousness of their own; seeking in that way to escape condemnation, instead of yielding to God they are flying to their strong holds, sheltering themselves in their prayers, reformations, desires, &c. or else by wrangling, as a person pursued runs away till overtaken, and then he fights: So the sinner, when he sees that he cannot save himself, is contending with God, objecting against divine proceedings, thinks that God's dealings are very hard measure. Rom. ix. 19.' And (p. 168.) 'Their best works are not only sinful, but properly sins.' Thus far Mr. Stoddard. And thus we see what the 'old divinity' is, as to *the perfection of the divine law, total depravity, and works done by unregenerate men.*

Yea, Mr. M. himself, in words at least, grants each of these points. For, 1. As to the *perfection of the divine law,* he sets himself to prove, (p. 27.) 'that the law is not abated.' 'And therefore nothing short of perfection may be looked upon as *the whole of what is required.*' And, 2. As to *total depravity,* he repeatedly asserts it through sect. 2. and 3. and particularly says, (p. 8.) 'That Adam did totally deprave his nature, by his first sin, and *wholly lost the moral image of God* in which he was created.' And he says, (p. 18.) 'Mankind at this day, antecedent to their exercising faith in Christ, are in much the same condition as Adam was after he had sinned.'—'The unregenerate sinner is in the likeness of fallen Adam.' And he speaks of them, (p. 52.) as 'such whose hearts are in a state of enmity against God.' And, 3. As to *the doings of the unregenerate,* he says, (p. 17.) 'As love to God is the leading principle of all acceptable obedience; so Adam having rendered himself incapable of loving God, he was of course incapable of yielding any truly holy and acceptable obedience to the will of God.' And, (p. 55.) 'Sinners under conviction really aim to 'establish their own righteousness which is of the law.' Which no doubt he will grant is a very wicked thing, being the great sin of the unbelieving Jews, for which, among other things, they were finally cast off by God. Rom. ix. 32. Now, therefore,

1. The question is not, whether all the holy commands of God's law, and holy exhortations of the Gospel, are given to the unregenerate, and binding on them; so as that they

are wholly inexcusable, and altogether criminals, in every neglect. This I affirm to be the truth. And this Mr. M. grants.

2. The question is not, whether the unregenerate do, in any one instance, perform one act of holy obedience, i. e. of obedience which has the least degree of holiness in it. Mr. M. allows they do not: for he asserts, that they are 'totally depraved,' through sect. 2. and 3.

3. The question is not, whether the law is at all abated, as to the unregenerate, so as to cease requiring them to perform every duty in a holy manner. For Mr. M. insists upon it, that 'the law is not abated.' p. 27. Yea, he 'asserts, that whatever God commands to be done, he requires the performance to be, not in a gracious, but in a *perfect manner*.' p. 38.

4. The question is not, whether a sinful manner of attending on the means, which God useth for the conversion of sinners, may not be less sinful and less dangerous, than a total neglect. This is granted. And, therefore,

5. The question, and the only question is, whether a sinful manner is not sinful? Or, in other words, whether the sinful manner itself is required? and so is, strictly speaking, a DUTY. In this we differ. And accordingly Mr. M. considers this as a fundamental error in my former piece, p. 35. 'That God requires holiness, and nothing but holiness.' The argument then stands thus:

To require the unregenerate to perform duties in a sinful manner, is to require them to break God's law. But Mr. M.'s external covenant requires the unregenerate to perform duties in a sinful manner: therefore Mr. M.'s external covenant requires men to break God's law.

That covenant which requires men to break God's law, is not from God. But this external covenant requires men to break God's law: therefore it is not from God [r].

[r] If God's law requires holiness, and nothing but holiness, the apostle's words are strictly true. Rom. viii. 7. The totally depraved are *not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*. But as the external covenant is of a nature opposite to the law of God, and suited to the carnal mind, as it requires graceless, unholy, sinful duties; therefore the totally depraved, as such, *may be subject to it*.

There are but three ways to get rid of this argument; either, 1. To deny the perfection of the divine law, or, 2. To deny total depravity, or, 3. To be inconsistent. The church of Scotland, and the churches in New-England, in their public formulas, not choosing to take either of these ways, were necessitated to leave Mr. M.'s external covenant out of their scheme of religion, and to affirm 'that sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace.' But each of these three ways, to get rid of this argument, and to establish the external covenant, Mr. M. has taken. For,

1. To this end, (p. 35.) he denies the perfection of the divine law, viz. 'That God requires holiness, and nothing but holiness.' And that,

2. In express contradiction to himself: for, (p. 34.) he says; 'I assert, that whatever God commands to be done, he requires the performance of it to be, not in a gracious, but in a perfect manner.' Which is evidently to require 'holiness and nothing but holiness.' For a perfect manner of performing every duty, perfectly excludes all sin. And if God requires this 'perfect manner,' he does, by so doing, forbid the contrary. Every imperfection, therefore, is forbidden. And accordingly, he says, (p. 28.) that 'the imperfections found in believers are sinful.' Surely then the total depravity found in unbelievers is sinful also; and yet he pleads, (p. 33.) "That if God, consistent with the law of perfection, may require the imperfect obedience of the believer, he may also require such doings, endeavours, and strivings, as take place in sinners, while unregenerate and entirely destitute of holiness." Now, I readily grant, that if God may consistently require the imperfections of believers, which are sinful; he may also require the unregenerate to seek and strive in that sinful manner in which they do. For if he may consistently require sin in the one, he may in the other also. But Mr. M. tells me, that God forbids sin in both; for he says, 'I assert that whatever God commands to be done, he requires the

And so the carnal mind, which is totally opposite to God's law, may be in conformity to the external covenant; and likewise lays a foundation for love. And therefore the carnal mind naturally loves the external covenant. And what we love, we wish to be true.

performance to be, not in a gracious, but in a *perfect manner.*' Which forbids the imperfections of the believer, and the total sinfulness of the 'totally depraved.' Inconsistencies of this kind, good as his natural genius is, run through his book, whenever he has occasion to speak on this subject; and he brings many texts of Scripture to keep himself in countenance: as if it were possible, that a book inspired by God should contain such inconsistencies. Whereas, could it be proved, that the bible ever required any sin, or any action to be done in a sinful manner, it would be such an argument that it did not come from him, who is perfectly and unchangeably holy, and who does, and who cannot but hate sin, even all sin, at all times, and in all persons, with perfect hatred, that I should not know how to answer it. For it looks like the most glaring contradiction in nature, that God should command, call, invite, urge, persuade, and beseech us to do, what he perfectly hates. And to say, that the true and living God does not perfectly hate all sin, at all times, is, as all will grant, wickedly to reproach the Holy One of Israel. Ps. l. 21. *Thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set thy sins in order before thee.*

The Pharisees took great pains in religion; they fasted twice in the week. And they thought they performed their duties in the manner in which God required. *All these things have I done from my youth up. Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment.* For if the law required them to do duties in the manner in which they did, then, in doing as they did, they did their duty. So they were not sinners, in their own view; rather, they were righteous, and needed no repentance. For they had nothing to repent of. For they had 'forsaken all known sin, and practised all known duty.' So that their consciences acquitted them. *As touching the righteousness of the law, I was blameless.* It was impossible they should be brought to repentance, while they viewed things in this light. It was almost impossible to beat them out of their scheme. Therefore publicans and harlots stood a better chance for conversion than they did, as our Saviour

declares, Mat. xxi. 31, 32[z]. For although the strivings of an awakened sinner, with the law of perfection in his view, may 'be useful to promote conviction of sin;' yet the strivings of a sinner, with a law in view which requires him to do as he does, instead of being 'useful to promote conviction of sins,' tends to establish him in his own righteousness. For in doing as he does, he does 'all known duty,' and so is blameless: and so is righteous, and so needs no repentance, no atonement, no pardon, no Christ, no grace; and *if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.* So this scheme issues at last in infidelity.

Our author says, (p. 52.) 'God has repeatedly commanded sinners to consider their ways:' very true, so he has. But has God ever once commanded them to consider their ways in an impenitent, self-righteous, self-justifying, Christ-rejecting manner? In which manner sinners always do consider their ways, so long as they remain under the reigning power of an impenitent, self-righteous, self-justifying, Christ-rejecting spirit: i. e. so long as they remain unregenerate. For *in this spirit unregeneracy consists.* But as soon as ever sinners begin to consider their ways in a penitent, self-condemning, God-justifying, Christ-prizing manner, they really begin to comply with 'the repeated commands to consider their ways,' which God has given to sinners. And these sinners are now not unregenerate, but regenerate. Thus holy David did. Psalm cxix. 56. *I thought upon my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.* And these are they, (Mat. xi. 12.) *who take the kingdom of heaven by force.* For the great truth of the Gospels, viewed as such sinners view them, will always be attended with answerable effects. Mat. xiii. 23. *But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it, which also beareth fruit.* But stony and thorny ground hearers bring forth no fruit.

z 'But this is, I think, a great mistake,' saith a late writer, 'they were not Pharisees that these words were spoken to, but Sadducees.' Referring to Mat. xxi. 31. But, it is plain, from ver. 45. that the Pharisees thought themselves to be the men, and that they were not mistaken. For the Evangelist saith, *and when the chief Priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.* Read from ver. 28—45.

While the vail is on the heart, the Gospel produces no fruit, but when the vail is taken away, then divine truths are seen in their GLORY, and then every answerable affection is BEGOTTEN. 2 Cor. iii. 15—18. But every unregenerate sinner is blind to the holy beauty of Christ's holy religion. For as Mr. Stoddard says, 'as man is an enemy to the law of God, so to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.' Therefore, as St. Paul says, 2 Cor. ii. 14. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither* CAN HE KNOW *them, because they are spiritually discerned.* Therefore Christ told Nicodemus, (John iii.) *Except a man be born again he* CANNOT SEE *the kingdom of God:* i. e. cannot understand and embrace Christianity. These, then, are the men who *take the kingdom of heaven by force,* and not they whom Mr. M. describes, as going about to establish their own righteousness which is of the law,' who, as he rightly observes, 'never do accomplish what they aim at.' See p. 54, 55.

But is it not indeed surprising, that Mr. M. should, (p. 52.) urge those words of the apostle, as an exhortation to impenitent, Christ-rejecting strivings, such as are all the strivings of impenitent Christless sinners, in 2 Cor. v. 20. *As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God?* For the apostle's exhortation is, *be ye reconciled to God:* and his argument is, God is now ready through Christ to be reconciled to you. Now, supposing this exhortation was given to the unregenerate, as Mr. M. would have it; if they believed that God was ready to be reconciled through Christ: i. e. if they believed the Gospel to be true, why should they not return home to God immediately as the prodigal son did to his father, as soon as ever he came to himself? But Mr. M. would have them, instead of returning to God now, in compliance with the apostle's exhortation, rather put it off a while, and strive 'to obtain those discoveries of God through Christ, by which they would be reconciled to God.' p. 53. Nay, but the apostle had just made all those 'discoveries' to them, which are contained in the Gospel on that subject. And adds, *behold now is the accepted time! now is the day of salvation!* And if

they had no prejudice against the truth, why should they not receive it at first hearing? And if they believed him, what could hinder their immediate return to God, unless they were at heart utterly disinclined to a reconciliation to him, let him be ever so willing on his part? And if they were utterly disinclined to a reconciliation to God in their hearts, none of their strivings could be considered as being of the nature of a compliance with that exhortation, *be ye reconciled to God.* But if they were so prejudiced against the truth as not to receive it, when clearly held forth before them by an inspired apostle, how could they be said to 'strive to discover' it? For a man does not strive to discover what he shuts his eyes against, when held up clearly before him. And so long as this disinclination to God and the truth remains total in a sinner, it is of the nature of a total rejection of the divine exhortation, *be ye reconciled to God.* And as soon as the least degree of love to God takes place in the heart, the sinner can no longer be considered as unregenerate, if the unregenerate are 'totally depraved,' as Mr. M. says they are[s].

But Mr. M. supposes, p. 54. that Acts viii. 9. will be to his purpose. *And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.* True, they did so, and what was the consequence? Our blessed Saviour, who knows all things, tells us, viz. that every one who *with a good and honest heart* heard the word, did understand it, and bring forth fruit, while stony and thorny ground hearers fell away. Luke viii. Now the question is this, was it not the duty of every one of them to have a good and honest heart, and so to hear, with a good and honest heart the first time? Yes, says Mr. M. for 'I assert that whatever God commands to be done, he requires the performance to be in a perfect manner.' But what then are these texts to his purpose, and a thousand more such like? For there are a thousand in the bible as much to his purpose as these.

[s] See the *nature of spiritual blindness* considered. *Essay on the nature and glory of the Gospel,* Sec. x.

3. But the bottom of the business with Mr. M. is this, that although in words he says that the unregenerate are 'totally depraved;' yet he does not seem rightly to understand the Scripture doctrine of total depravity, as held forth in our confession of faith: but really to suppose, that unregenerate sinners are naturally inclined, while unregenerate, to love God, even God's true and real character, as revealed in the Gospel; so that, as soon as ever they 'discover' what that character is, they will love it, even *without any new principle of grace*, even as naturally as Jacob loved Rachel the first time he saw her. But as to that character of God which is revealed in the law, he supposes that sinners never can, and never will love it: because, 'to love it is the same thing as to love their own misery.' But as to the character of God which is revealed in the Gospel, they need *no new principle of grace* in order to love it, any more than Jacob needed a new principle, in order to love Rachel. p. 43—48. And this being supposed, awakened sinners may from natural principles, long and most earnestly desire to 'discover' this new character of God which is exhibited in the Gospel; and so seek after this 'discovery' with proper, direct desires after it, for itself. And these desires he therefore considers as being in nature, kind, and tendency, the same with what he calls the gracious desire of those whom he esteems regenerate. These seekings and strivings he therefore supposes to be required in the same sense, and for the same purpose, as the seekings and strivings of the true saint. p. 33, 34. To establish these sentiments, is one chief design of his book. And thus far I fully agree with him, that there is no difference in kind between the religious exercises of the unregenerate, and the religious exercises of his regenerate man. And in this view, I wonder not at his zeal against this fundamental sentiment of *a specific difference*, as clearly held forth in president *Edwards' treatise concerning religious affections*. p. 36, 37, 38, 39, 40. For his regenerate man has professedly no *new principle of grace*. And accordingly he appears in fact to have no more grace than his unregenerate man has. For he is as great an enemy to God's law, and to the holy nature of God, therein exhibited, as the unregenerate.

p. 41, 42, 43. And the God he loves is professedly of a different character, even of a character so different, that the unregenerate will naturally love it, as soon as they 'discover' it, and its favourable aspect towards them, *without any new principle of grace.* 'p. 43, 44—48. And this is the true reason, 'ninety-nine in a hundred' of his regenerate men are so at a loss about their good estate, that they cannot see their way clear to make a profession of godliness. p. 79, 80. Which renders his external covenant as necessary for them as for the unregenerate; for if the door is not opened wide enough to take in the unregenerate, as such, his regenerate man cannot with a good conscience come into the visible church. For, as Mr. Stoddard, in order to prove the doctrine of the *specific difference between common and saving grace,* rightly observes, in his *Nature of saving conversion,* (p. 8.) 'If the difference between saving grace and common, lay in the degree, *no man could judge that his grace is saving.*' And thus he goes on to reason; 'men may know that they have saving grace, 1 John iii. 14. 2. Cor. vii. 10. But if the difference lay in the degree, how should man go about to determine that their grace was saving? The man may know that he has a greater degree of confidence, sorrow, and zeal, than formerly he had; he may have reason to think that he goeth beyond some other professors in these things; but upon what foundation can he determine that he hath them in such a degree as to secure his salvation? Where has God revealed what degree is saving, and what is not saving? What warrant has any man to judge himself in a safe condition, if there be several degrees of grace that are not saving?' What rule can any minister lay down to guide men in this matter? Men must needs be left in a *perpetual uncertainty, and remain in the dark about their eternal state.*' Thus far Mr. Stoddard. But of these things more hereafter, when we come to consider the *new scheme of religion* which Mr. M. has advanced, in order to support his external covenant.

SECTION IV.

Isai. xlv. 19. *I said not unto the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain.*

Mat. vii. 7. *Ask, and it shall be given you: Seek, and ye shall find.*

A view of the exhortations, and promises of the Gospel: and the true reason pointed out why the doings of the unregenerate do not entitle to the blessings promised.

OUR author, (p. 34.) says, 'If it should be asked, whether there are any promises of salvation to these endeavours of the unregenerate; I readily answer, there are none. The absolute authority of God is not such a limited thing, that he can lay no commands upon his creatures, without adding a promise to the performance: divine sovereignty is not incumbered with such a tether.' These words have led me to take a view of the divine exhortations and promises through the Old and New Testament, a few of which may be transcribed.

EXHORTATIONS TO SINNERS.	PROMISES ANNEXED.
Lev. vi. 2—6. If a soul sin, he shall restore, he shall bring his trespass-offering unto the Lord; the Priest shall make an atonement for him, &c.	Lev. vi. 7. And it shall be forgiven him.
Lev xxvi. 40, 41. If they shall confess their iniquity; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept the punishment of their iniquity:	Lev. xxvi. 42. Then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.
1 Kings viii. 47, 48. If they shall bethink themselves, and repent, and make supplication unto thee; and so return unto thee with all their heart; and pray unto thee toward the house which I have built for thy name;	1 Kings viii. 49. Then hear thou their prayer in heaven thy dwelling place; and forgive thy people, &c.
Prov. i. 23. Turn you at my reproof:	Prov. i. 23. Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you.
Prov. ii. 3, 4. If thou criest after knowledge and liftest up thy voice for understanding: if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures:	Prov. ii. 5. Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord; and find the knowledge of God.

EXHORTATIONS TO SINNERS.	PROMISES ANNEXED.
Prov. xxviii. 13. Whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, i. e. his sins,	Prov. xxviii. 13. Shall find mercy.
Isai. lv. 6. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.	Isai. xlv. 19. I said not to the house of Jacob, seek ye me in vain.
Ver. 7. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord,	Isai. lv. 7. And he will have mercy on him, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon.
Mat. vii. 7. Ask—	Mat. vii. 7. And it shall be given you.
——— Seek—	——— And ye shall find.
——— Knock—	——— And it shall be opened unto you.
Mat. vii. 8. For every one that asketh,	Mat. vii. 8. Receiveth.
——— and he that seeketh,	——— findeth.
——— and to him that knocketh,	——— it shall be opened.
Luke xviii. 14. He that humbleth himself,	Luke xviii. 14. Shall be exalted.
Mark xvi. 16. He that believeth and is baptised,	Mark xvi. 16. Shall be saved.
Acts iii. 9. Repent and be converted,	Acts iii. 19. That your sins may be blotted out.

These texts are a true specimen of the whole tenour of the sacred writings on this subject; and let the candid reader stop, and look over them two or three times, and consider and think for himself; and these and such like remarks will rise in his mind of themselves; or at the least, the truth of them will appear plain as soon as mentioned.

1. There are directions given to sinners, in the holy Scriptures, in and by which, a full answer is given to that question, *what shall we do to be saved?* and beyond dispute, it is their duty and interest to follow God's directions, immediately and without the least delay [t].

[t] Q. If a full answer is given to that question by God himself, why do awakened sinners continue to repeat it? Why do they still say, *what shall we do to be saved?* If God has answered the question, why are they at a loss?

A. God's answer does not suit their hearts, and so they are deaf to it. God speaks, and speaks plain enough, but they do not hear. God cries, *hear, and*

2. There are promises made to sinners, without exception, entitling them to all the blessings of the Gospel, upon their complying with God's directions.

3. These promises are not of the nature of general encouragements, rendering it hopeful, yet leaving it uncertain, whether sinners should obtain, if they comply with the directions given them by God: but they are as plain, full, and express promises, as any in the bible, and do establish a certain and universal connexion—thus, *Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall have mercy.* This promise extends universally to all who *confess and forsake their sins*; and establishes a certain connexion, *they shall have mercy.* But that there never was one who failed, and never will be one who will fail, who complies with God's directions, is evident from the testimony of him who came from the Father's bosom, and knew the mind of God, and came into this world to reveal it unto us. For he says, not only *ask, and it shall be given you*; but he adds, *for every one that asketh receiveth.* From which we have as full evidence, as we have that Jesus is the Son of God, that there never was, and never will be, one single instance among mankind, who, according to this direction, ever did ask, or ever will ask, for the blessings of the Gospel, and fail of receiving. *For every one that asketh receiveth.* So again, *hear and your soul shall live; look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth; whosoever will, let him come; him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out,* &c. &c. &c. all prove the same point. Besides all this, and that which confirms the point still further, is, that destruction is threatened only to those who refuse to hearken to God's directions.

your soul shall live. They have ears, but they are uncircumcised, Pagan ears; and so *in hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand.* For every *good and honest heart hears the word, understands it, and brings forth fruit.* Their deafness and blindness is wholly of a criminal nature. Thus when the famine came, the prodigal son cried, What shall I do? The right answer was plain and easy to a good and honest heart. But he hated to go home. For as yet his heart was opposite to it. Therefore he said, 'I will go and join myself to a citizen of that country, and feed his swine.' *But when he came to himself,* he instantly felt it through and through his heart, that it was his present duty and interest, immediately, to *arise and go to his father.* And nothing but the vicious state of his heart prevented him knowing this before.

Prov. i. 24, 25. "Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof. I also will laugh at your calamity." But on the other hand, (ver. 23.) "Turn at my reproof, and I will pour out my spirit unto you."—And,

4. These promises do establish a certain connexion between the first act of compliance with these directions, and the blessings of the Gospel. Indeed, where one act of compliance takes place, sinners will continue in a course of compliance. As for example: When the prodigal son returned home to his father, he was upon the first act, upon his first return, received as a child, and entitled to all the privileges of such. But then it is equally true, he never left his father's house and turned prodigal again, as he had done before; but on the contrary, he brought forth fruit meet for repentance. And as he was thus received on his first return, so it is in all instances. *For whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall have mercy.* And again, *Ask, and it shall be given you; for every one that asketh receiveth.* If the first act of compliance with these directions should not entitle to the blessings promised, by parity of reason, the second act of compliance might not entitle. And so it might come to pass that some who comply with God's directions, might fail of the blessings promised, contrary to the plain tenour of all the promises. See John iv. 14. and v. 24. Mat. x. 42. Acts ii. 38. and xvi. 31. Eph. i. 13, 14. Phil. i. 6.

5. These promises make it certain, that among all the unpardoned sinners in the world, whatever pains they have any of them taken in religion, yet there is not one, who ever, in any one single act, did comply with God's directions. For had they complied, they would have been pardoned. For God himself has said it. *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* And our blessed Saviour, in his sermon on the Mount, directs us to pray for pardon. *When ye pray, say—Forgive us our debts.* And then soon declares, *Ask and it shall be given you.* And then, to put his meaning for ever

beyond dispute, he adds, *For every one that asketh receiveth.* He, therefore, whose sins are not pardoned, never yet in the whole course of his life, did so much as once confess and forsake them, and ask God to forgive him, according to divine direction: no, not once. To disbelieve this point, is, in effect, to disbelieve the whole of divine revelation. For he that believeth not this, hath *made God a liar.*

Now if these things are true, we may hence learn,

1. That Mr. Sandeman's scheme, relative to directions to be given to sinners, is not agreeable to the word of God. For he says, 'Let all the prophets and apostles be consulted upon the question, what is required of us in order to acceptance with God? we shall find their unanimous reply to be every thing, or nothing.' For, according to Mr. Sandeman, the sinner is pardoned before repentance, and faith is not an act, but a mere passive thing. So therefore, 'nothing' is to be done by the sinner, in order to pardon and justification. For no volition, act, or exercise of mind whatever, is needful in order to it. And so no direction at all is to be given. For Mr. Sandeman, speaking of the atonement, says, 'All its true friends will join in affirming, that Christ came to render *impenitent sinners accepted unto everlastimg life,* by the works which he himself wrought, and thus by the *discovery of preventing goodness, to lead them to repentance.*' Thus they are *regenerated by light,* according to Mr. Sandeman. But from what has been said, nothing can be plainer, than that both the Old Testament and the New, do give directions to sinners to do something. Thus, when those who were *pricked at the heart* on the day of Pentecost, asked Peter, and the rest of the apostles, saying, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* Peter did not say, 'be perfect;' nor did he say, 'do nothing:' but he said, *Repent and be baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus for the remission of sins.* So again, a few days after, *Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.* And when the trembling jailor put the question to the apostle Paul, *What shall I do to be saved?* his answer was, *believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.* To say, therefore, that there is 'nothing' to be done in order

to salvation, and so no directions to be given to sinners, is directly contrary to the holy Scriptures.

Mr. Sandeman's scheme, in a few words, is this: that we are to give instruction to the unregenerate, but no exhortation at all. We are to hold up the truth to their view, with its evidence, that it may strike their minds, give them hope, and beget love. For regeneration is wrought by light, and is the effect and fruit of faith. But no call, no invitation, no direction, no exhortation is to be given; because no volition is to take place before justification. For the single belief of the simple truth, in which simple belief no volition is implied, is the only thing implied in that faith by which we are justified. But no means can be proper to be used for the production of this faith, but merely holding up the simple truth, with its evidence, to view. This therefore is the whole the preacher has to do. And the truth, as soon as known, gives hope, and so begets love to itself. Just as the news of a large importation of corn in an island perishing with famine, as it spreads through the island, gains credit, gives hope of relief, and begets love to that which is to relieve them. And all godliness consists in love to that which relieves us.—This is Mr. Sandeman's scheme.—N. B. 1. He has the same notion of total depravity and regeneration, with Mr. M. viz. that the carnal heart is at enmity only against that character of God, which is exhibited in the law: but as to that character which is revealed in the Gospel, the carnal unregenerate heart is disposed to love it, as soon as known. Just as the news of the importation of corn, in such a famished island, will be agreeable to every inhabitant who hears it, and understands it. 2. In both Mr. Sandeman's and Mr. Mather's scheme, we need no *new principle of grace* in order to love God, any more than the famished inhabitants of the island needed new stomachs, in order to love bread. And therefore, 3. The regenerating, sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit on both schemes, are absolutely needless. For, 4. As we are not to be reconciled to that character of God against which we are at enmity; but only to a character which is so agreeable to our hearts in our natural state, that it will beget love to itself, as soon as known, on which account we need no

new principle of grace, in order to love it; so for the same reason, the regenerating, sanctifying influences of the Spirit, are needless. Even as it was with Jacob when he went to Padan-aram to get a wife; the state of his mind being such by nature, that he would love Rachel as soon as seen, he therefore needed no supernatural influence to dispose his heart to love her. 5. On both schemes the sinner is pardoned before repentance. For he believes first; then he is justified; and then he hopes; and then he is regenerated and loves; and then he repents. But to return,

2. From what has been said, we may also see, that Mr. Mather is equally mistaken, in insinuating, that sinners may comply with the exhortations and directions of God to sinners, and yet be entitled to no promise. For God has, as we have seen, in the most plain and express manner, annexed promises to his exhortations and directions. Our author says, 'The absolute authority of God is not such a limited thing, that he can lay no commands upon his creatures, without adding a promise to the performance.' But the creed of even all the ancient patriarchs, short as it was, had this for one article, that God was *a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.* Heb. xi. 5, 6. And under the Jewish dispensation, God affirms, that *he never said to the house of Jacob, seek ye my face in vain.* Is. xlv. 19. And when the Son of God appears in flesh, he speaks plainer still: *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened.* And to fix and settle us for ever in the belief of this point, he goes on to reason thus: "Or what man is there of you, whom, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?" 'To them that ask him,' be they who they will, of all the human race. For the Gospel is, by divine order, to be preached to *every creature.* And *whosoever will, let him come;* and *he that cometh shall in no wise be cast out.* The warrant to come to the throne of grace, is founded in the blood of the Son of God: for he has *opened a way into the holiest of all, by his own blood.* And the invitations of

the Gospel are given to all, without exception. *Go ye into the high-ways, and as many as ye find, bid to the marriage.* Any sinner, therefore, on this side hell, has a good warrant to come to the throne of grace, to confess his sins to God, and to ask forgiveness in the name of Christ. And no sinner, who hath done so, in the manner in which God has directed, ever went away from the throne of grace unpardoned: but it has always happened to him, as it did to the prodigal son, *when he was yet afar off, his father saw him, and had compassion on him, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him.* Of the truth of this, we have the same evidence as we have that Jesus is the Messiah. For he hath said, that *every one that asketh receiveth.* Therefore,

3. From what has been said on this subject, we may learn, that these words of Mr. Stoddard, before quoted, are strictly true. Speaking of the unregenerate sinner, he says, 'they do not the thing that God commands: there is no obedience to God in what they do: they don't attend the will of God [u].' For if they did attend God's directions, and obey the divine exhortations, and *ask*, and *seek*, and *knock*, as they are commanded, they would obtain. The only reason their prayers are not answered, the only reason *they ask, and receive not*, is, *because they ask amiss*; i. e. because they ask not as God directs them, but in a manner contrary to his directions. So again, the only reason they seek and do not find, is because

u 'Men in their natural condition are guilty of a world of sin. Their very religion is iniquity. Isaiah i. 5. They pray for holiness, but oppose it. John. v. 52. *They have not the love of God in them.* They praise God because of his excellency, but they do not believe him to be such an one; it is a burden to them that they suspect it, and they wish he were not such an one. They wish God did not see their hearts, and had not power to avenge himself. There is nothing but hypocrisy in all they do. They confess their sins, and bewail their iniquities, but they have no godly sorrow. They put up earnest requests for holiness, but do not sincerely desire it. They strive against sin, and all the while are cherishing of it. They have pangs of affection, but no love. They have some affection to saints, but hate real holiness. They are zealous against some sins, but hate none. They are striving for salvation, but refuse the offers of it. Sometimes God tries them, by convincing them of the great danger of their damnation, and they show a dreadful wicked rebellious spirit, that they are scared to see themselves. There is a great deal of the spirit of the devil in them.' Stoddard's *Nature of Conversion.* p. 96, 97, 98.

they seek amiss; i. e. as Mr. M. expresses it, 'aim at what can never be accomplished, even to establish their own righteousness,' and will not *submit themselves to the righteousness of God.* For *he that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy* [x]. And, therefore,

4. The true reason, and the only reason, that the doings of the unregenerate do not entitle them to the blessings promised in the Gospel, is, because in all they do, there is no one act of compliance with God's directions. For if it is true, that *whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy;* then it is equally true, that he, who hath not found mercy, never did confess and forsake his sins, according to the divine direction. If it be true, that *every one that asketh receiveth;* then it is equally true, that the unpardoned sinner never did ask pardon at the hands of God, in the sense of the text. For to say, that *I have confessed and forsaken my sins, I have asked pardon in the name of Christ, according to the divine direction; yet I have found no mercy, God hath not forgiven me,* is, if we may use the language of inspiration, to *make God a liar.* Therefore,

To say, that the unregenerate, in their endeavours, do the things that God commands them to do, and that yet there is no promise to their doings, is expressly to contradict the word of God. For he *never said to the house of Jacob, seek ye my face in vain.* And, therefore,

The question between Mr. M. and us is not, whether God has required the unregenerate, to *ask,* and *seek,* and *knock,* and

x Great pains have been taken to misrepresent and blacken this point. It hath been said, that we affirm that the unregenerate are not required to *seek,* or *strive,* or *pray.* Whereas in truth we affirm, that the unregenerate are required to *seek,* and *strive,* and *pray.* But then we add, that 'they do not the thing that God commands.' The question, therefore, is not whether God requires the unregenerate to *seek,* and *strive,* and *pray;* but the only question is, whether they 'do the thing that God commands.' This is the point in dispute. St. Paul has declared for our side of the question, in as strong terms as ever we used, in Rom. viii. 7, 8. *The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.* And dare any Christian allow himself to hate, and to blacken a doctrine taught by an inspired apostle? Or is the doctrine so odious to any, that they will not believe, that he did not teach it, however strongly his words express it?

strive, and *labour*. It is granted that he has. And it is affirmed, that God has promised the blessings of the Gospel to a compliance with these directions, in God's sense of them. But it is also proved, from Mr. M.'s own words, that the unregenerate, 'as such,' to use Mr. Stoddard's words, 'do not attend the will of God; do not the thing that he commands;' because, as Mr. M. says, 'There is no promise of salvation to their endeavours;' whereas *God promises salvation to those who comply with his directions.*

Now, therefore, let Mr. M. either take sides with the Arminians, and say, that *there are promises to the doings of the unregenerate:* or let him join with Mr. Stoddard, and say, that 'they do not the thing that God commands: there is no obedience to God in what they do; they do not attend the will of God.' Or let him openly and plainly declare, 'that God has directed sinners what to do that they may be saved; but it is not best that sinners should be urged to follow those directions which God has given them, which if they do follow, they surely will be saved. And that, therefore, he is determined to direct them to do, as they do; although there is no promise to their doings: yea, although it is certain beforehand, that they *never will accomplish the thing they aim at.*'

A minister of Christ is sent to preach the Gospel to the Indians, and,

Question 1. Is it not the duty of the Indians to assemble, and hear him?

Answer. Yes, it is their duty to assemble, to hear the Gospel preached. If the God of nature speaks to men, men ought to hear. But,

Q. 2. Is it not their duty to come to hear with good and honest hearts, the first time they come?

A. Yes, it is as really their duty to come and hear with good and honest hearts the first time, as it is at any succeeding time. For it is as really the duty of Pagans to be well disposed toward the true God who made them, and ready to hearken to his voice, as it is the duty of any of the human kind. Rom. i. 20, 21. 28.

Q. 3. But if they have all of them pagan hearts, shall they come and hear with their pagan hearts, in a pagan manner, rather than not come and hear at all?

A. If they come with pagan hearts, in a pagan manner, they sin greatly. If they refuse to come, their sin is greater. If they come with pagan hearts, in a pagan manner, they are in greater danger of turning a deaf ear to the Gospel, to their own destruction. But if they refuse to come at all, their perdition is certain. So then it is for their interest to come with pagan hearts, in a pagan manner, rather than not to come at all. Rom. x. 14.

Q. 4. Is the missionary authorized by the commission of Christ to baptise these Pagans, as well as preach the Gospel to them?

A. The commission of Christ authorizes him to preach to them while Pagans; but not to baptise them until they become believers. Mark xvi. 15, 16.

Q. 5. Suppose two Indians, in other respects equal, one has heard the Gospel twenty years, the other never heard of it, both die Pagans in heart, which will be most miserable after death?

A. He that hath heard the Gospel. For he that knows his master's will, and does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes. Luke xii. 47, 48.

Q. 6. If so, why is not a birth and education in the heathen world to be preferred?

A. In a land of Gospel light there is some hope of salvation from eternal misery: In Pagan darkness there is no hope at all. Luke x. 10, 11, 12. Acts iv. 12. Eph. ii. 11, 12.

Q. 7. Is there then greater probability of the conversion of some sinners than of others?

A. According to the rule by which mankind judge of likelihood, viz. that like things have been wont to take place in like circumstances, it is more likely that some sinners will be converted than others. Thus, more were converted among the posterity of Abraham, from his day to the day of Christ, than in any other nation in the world, through that period. So more were converted among those who attended the ministry of John Baptist, of Jesus Christ, and of his apostles,

than among those who never heard them. So there is more hope of the conversion of the children of godly parents, who are in a pious manner devoted to God in baptism, and who are brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; than there is of the conversion of the children of ungodly parents, who are brought to baptism merely to be in the fashion, and who are brought up according to the course of this world, in the service of diverse lusts and pleasures, to live in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. And so it is more likely that they will be converted, who live under an orthodox, pious, faithful minister, and under the watch and care of a church, whose members walk with God, and the light of whose holy examples shines all around them; than they who live under an unsound, ungodly, unfaithful minister, and in the company of carnal and loose professors, who join to hate and to blacken the true doctrines of the Gospel, and to ridicule a life of strict piety. And so it is more likely that they who are under deep and genuine legal conviction, will be converted, than they who are quite secure in sin; and more likely that awakened sinners who forsake bad company, and every external vicious practice, and spend much time in reading God's word, in hearing good preaching, in meditation, in secret prayer, and withal confess their faults to those they have ill used, and make restitution to those they have injured; more likely, I say, that awakened sinners will be converted who take this course, although moved thereto merely by legal terrors, and self-righteous hope, being still *dead in sin*, contrary to God and to all good in the inmost temper of their hearts; more likely, I say, than if they with Cain fled from the presence of the Lord, and ran to taverns, and to frolics, and gave up themselves to drinking and debauchery, on purpose to stifle their convictions, and drown the clamours of their consciences. In a word, there is no doubt but that there is much more, even an hundred or a thousand times more likelihood, that some sinners will be converted than others. Yet still it remains true as it is written, Mat. xix. 30. *But many that are first, shall be last; and the last shall be first.* See also Luke xiii. 29, 30. Thus Cain was the eldest child of Adam, but he was left, while Abel was taken. And

thus the Jews were God's peculiar people, but they were cast off; while the Gentiles were called. And thus Judas, one of Christ's own family, is lost; while a persecuting Saul, brought up among the Pharisees, is saved. That *no flesh might glory in the presence* of God. 1 Cor. i. 26—31.

Q. 8. Is there really any hope at all, in the sinner's case, that he will be converted and saved, but what results merely from the sovereign grace of God?

A. The same sovereign grace, which passed by the fallen angels, and provided a Redeemer for fallen man, even the Son of God, to die in our stead, must as freely give us a Sanctifier, or we perish. The same sovereign grace that appoints our lot in a land of light, that presents us with the external means of grace, that begins the work of conviction, that drives the reluctant sinner to an external reformation, and to a close attention to eternal things by legal terrors, even the same sovereign grace must carry on conviction till it is deep and thorough, and give repentance unto life, or the work will never be done. For the sinner, left to himself, will catch hold of some false hope, or go back to security; and so finally, if left to himself, will infallibly perish.—And he deserves to be left to himself. He is under the curse of the righteous law of God, and may be justly given up to ruin. There is nothing but the sovereign grace of God to prevent it. And so there is really no hope in his case, but what at bottom results merely from the sovereign grace of God. Rom. xi. 5, 6, 7. Eph. ii. 1—5. Tit. iii. 3, 4, 5.

Q. 9. Is it for the advantage of the sinner, in this state, to tell him, that God requires him to do as he does, so that in doing as he does, he does what God requires?

A. No: This is not to tell him the truth, nor would this tend to promote his good, but his hurt: even to settle him down on his own righteousness, while dead in sin, as has been before shown. Rather, when an awakened sinner has been in his closet two or three hours, meditating, crying, and praying, in great anguish, driven on by the fears of hell and self-righteous hopes; yet still wholly impenitent, so that if there was no hell, he would never make another prayer, or shed another tear for his sins, but rather go back to them

with pleasure; when he rises from his knees, I would have his conscience cry out against him in such language as this—'Oh, thou ungodly, impenitent, guilty wretch! thou hast done nothing all this while, as it ought to be done. Thy heart is still a heart of stone, wholly opposite to God and to all good. This is thy proper character; and therefore the wrath of God still abideth on thee.' For this is the very truth.

Q. 10. What directions then ought to be given to such a sinner? And what ought we to say to him?

A. Say all the things that God has said. Hold up the perfect law of God close to his conscience, to show him his duty and his sin: for the law is the school-master which God has appointed to bring us to Christ. Hold up the Gospel-way of salvation, with all its evidence to his conscience, that he may understand and believe it; for faith cometh by hearing. And let the whole tenour of all our discourse, to the sinner, be to explain and to enforce the exhortation of John the baptist, of Jesus Christ, and of his apostles, in those remarkable words, REPENT, AND BELIEVE THE GOSPEL. This will tend to increase genuine conviction of all sin and guilt, and to prevent delusive and false hopes, and to shut him up to the faith.

We are to dwell largely on the being and perfections of God, and our original obligations to him, who is by nature God, and our Creator. We are particularly to explain the nature and reasonableness of the divine law, and to answer the sinner's objections against it. We are to exhibit to his view the sin which he stands charged with in the divine law, and the curse he is under for it, and the only way of obtaining pardon through the blood of Christ. In a word, we are to open to his view the whole plan of the Gospel, the infinite riches of God's grace, the nature and sufficiency of Christ's atonement, the readiness of God to forgive repenting sinners who come to him in the name of Christ, the calls and invitations of the Gospel, the dreadfulness of eternal misery in the lake of fire and brimstone; the glory and blessedness of the heavenly state, the shortness and uncertainty of time, the worth of his soul, the dangers which attend him from the world, the flesh, and the devil, the inexcusable guilt of final

impenitence, the aggravated punishment of Gospel sinners, &c. &c. &c. And so bring into the view of his conscience every argument and motive to repent and to return to God through Jesus Christ.

Just as any plain man of common sense would do, who was sent after a run-away son, who had risen against his father, and made an attempt on his life, and then run off; for which his father had disinherited him, and was determined he should be disinherited for ever, unless he would return, and before the whole family, on his knees, confess his fault, and take the whole blame to himself, and justify his father's resentments, and freely own and acknowledge that it was good enough for him to be cast off by his father, and no blemish, but a beauty in his character, to disinherit such a son; and in this view, ask forgiveness, as of mere free grace. Common sense would teach such a man, in all he said, to this rebellious, run-away son, to vindicate his father's character and conduct, and to prove to him that all the blame was in him, and that it was his duty and interest, without the least hesitation, or one objection, on the first invitation, to do as did the prodigal in the parable, when he came to himself, viz. *Arise, and go to his father.* And so long as the run-away son should refuse to do this, common sense would teach any plain man to consider him as impenitent; and to look upon all his tears and cries as selfish and hypocritical. But should the run-away son not only refuse to return, but begin, in his own justification, to plead, and say, 'my father's character, and my father's government, are not objects of love. He has disinherited me. To love him would be the same thing as to love to be disinherited; which would be to love my own disgrace and poverty; which would be to love my own misery; which is impossible. To say, that this conduct of his is not a blemish, but a beauty in his character, would be a sin: for I ought to love myself, and to stand for my honour, and for my right. Such a submission he shall never have from me. However, if he will receive me to favour, and restore me to the inheritance, impenitent as I am, I will forgive what is past, and be reconciled for the future.' Common sense would declare such a son, not only impeni-

tent, but obstinately impenitent, and intolerably haughty. And, in this view, any plain man would tell him, in the most peremptory language, that there was no hope in his case, unless he would humble himself, and come to a deep and sound repentance. Thus John the baptist, Jesus Christ and his apostles, called sinners to repentance; and never once gave impenitent sinners, as such, the least ground to hope for pardon; but expressly said, *except ye repent ye shall all perish.* And to the true penitent, they gave no ground to hope for pardon, on the foot of his own righteousness. For it was a settled point, that *without shedding of blood there is no remission.* And indeed, that repentance is not genuine, in which we do not, from the heart, give up every self-justifying plea, take all the blame to ourselves, and accept the punishment of our iniquity, with a disposition to look only to free grace through Jesus Christ, for that pardon and salvation which the Gospel offers.

N. B. In this plan of dealing with an awakened sinner, two things are taken for granted, viz. 1. That total depravity and moral agency are consistent. And 2. That repentance unto life is, consistently, both the sinner's duty and God's gift. Ezek. xviii. 31. and chap. xxxvi. 26. Acts ii. 38. Acts iii. 19. Acts v. 31.

Obj. The run-away son, in the similitude, is a moral agent with respect to all the duties required of him by his father; and so is wholly to blame for his disaffection to his father, and may be considered and treated accordingly: but the unregenerate sinner is not a moral agent, with respect to that love to God which is required in the law, or to that faith and repentance which are called for in the Gospel. That is, he cannot love God, believe, or repent. And therefore he cannot be considered, as being wholly to blame for his disaffection towards God, and for his unbelief and impenitence, or treated accordingly. For 'to love God as exhibited in the law, is the same thing as to love his own misery.' And to believe in Christ and repent, before he has had 'a discovery of Christ,' is as impossible as it is to love an object of which we have no idea. To exhort the unregenerate sinner, there-

fore, as we would exhort such a run-away son, is absurd and inconsistent. p. 42, 43.

Ans. It is true that in thus dealing with the awakened sinner, we consider him, while unregenerate, as a moral agent, possessed of every qualification essential to moral agency. For we think that unregeneracy consists, not in being destitute of any of those natural faculties which are essential to moral agency, but only in being destitute of a heart to do our duty, and in having an heart opposite thereto. John iii. 6. Rom. viii. 7. But want of inclination, and disinclination to that duty which God requires of us, instead of lessening blame, is that for which we are blame-worthy. Luke xix. 27. We consider the unregenerate sinner, therefore, with respect to love to God and faith in Christ, and with respect to all duties required in law and Gospel, as a moral agent, to whom the commands of the one, and the exhortations of the other may, with propriety, be given; and who is wholly to blame in not obeying the one, and in not complying with the other. And all we shall, at present, say in answer to the objection, is, that if the unregenerate sinner is not a moral agent with respect to the divine law, then he does not deserve the curse of it, for not *continuing in all things:* which to say, is to contradict Gal. iii. 10. And if he is not a moral agent, with respect to the Gospel, the external revelation of it being enjoyed, then he is not to blame for impenitence and unbelief, nor does he deserve any punishment for these crimes: which to say, is to contradict Mat. xi. 20—24. Luke x. 3—12. John iii. 18, 19. John xvi. 9. In a word, if the unregenerate sinner is not a moral agent with respect to law and Gospel, then the Old and New Testament, which consider and treat him as such, are not from God. To say, therefore, he is not a moral agent, is in effect to give up divine revelation. That is, to say that the unregenerate sinner is not wholly to blame in not loving God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself; and that the unregenerate sinner, who lives under the light of the Gospel, is not wholly to blame for impenitence and unbelief, is to deny the first principles of the Scripture scheme of religion, and in effect, to give up the whole of it. And to give up the bible, rather

than to take that blame to ourselves, which belongs to us, is the very essence of infidelity, and that which constitutes it so great a crime. John iii. 19, 20.—See President *Edwards* on *Freedom of Will*, part 3. sect. iv.

SECTION V.

Gal. iii. 10. *For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse. For it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.*

Impenitent, self-righteous, Christless sinners, are under the curse of the law of God: but this is inconsistent with their being in covenant with God, in good standing in his sight, by any works which they do, while such.

WE will premise a few things, and then particularly explain and prove the above proposition, and show the inconsistence between the covenant of works, and Mr. M.'s external covenant, considered as conditional.

1. God the Creator and moral Governor of the world, did originally deserve supreme love, and universal, perfect obedience from his creature man. This was implied in that law given to Adam, *in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.*

2. God is in himself as amiable now as he was before the fall of man; as worthy to be loved, honoured, and obeyed; for he is the same now that he was then. There is no alteration in his nature, and he has done nothing to forfeit his character; if, therefore, before the fall he was worthy of love, he is equally worthy since. To say, that there was originally any blemish in the divine character; or to say, that he has brought any blemish upon himself in any instance of his conduct, since the beginning of the world, is to deny his divinity. It is to say, that he is not by nature God; he is not, and never was, an absolutely perfect Being. A denial of the divinity of Christ is the foundation of the Arian heresy. But

we must deny the divinity of God the Father, we must deny the divinity of the Godhead itself, or we can never justify the least degree of disaffection toward the Deity in our hearts: but must take the whole blame to ourselves. For if God is in himself the same infinitely amiable Being he has been from everlasting, and if all his conduct has been like himself, perfect in beauty, without a blemish; if we do not love him with all our hearts the whole fault must be in ourselves, and not at all in him.—And on the other hand, if God has in any instance done amiss, not conducted in that perfect, in that amiable and glorious manner which became him, who is by nature God; it must be owned, that we have just cause to love him less, and in some degree, at least, to dislike him; and our conduct in so doing may be vindicated. Nor can God be just when he speaketh, or clear when he judgeth, if he looks upon us and treats us as being wholly to blame, in not loving him with all our hearts. But if the blame is not wholly in us, it is partly in him. And if there is the least blemish in his character or conduct, then he is not so perfect as he might be; he is not absolutely perfect; that is, he is not God.——Therefore,

3. The denial of the divinity of the one only true and living God, is the only foundation on which, consistently, fallen man can be justified more or less, in not perfectly conforming to the divine law. For if it is granted, that the divine character was originally, absolutely perfect, and that the whole of his conduct towards us, from the beginning of the world, has been absolutely perfect too, then every thing in God, and belonging to God, conspires to render him a perfectly amiable and lovely Being, and to oblige us to love him with all our hearts, and to render us criminal and without excuse in the least neglect or defect. Nor can there be any excuse invented but what must issue in a denial of his divinity. For if the fault is not wholly in us, it is partly in him; and if partly in him, then he is not absolutely perfect; i. e. he is not God.—And to say that, by the fall, man ceased to be a moral agent is, by fair construction, subversive of the whole of divine revelation. For,

4. It is a dictate of common sense, that we do not need a surety to pay a debt for us, which we ourselves do not owe. And, therefore, if the divine law was not binding on fallen man, antecedent to the consideration of Christ's undertaking to answer the demands of the law in our stead, then there was no need that he should have undertaken to answer the demands of the law in our stead. For there was no need that our surety should pay a debt for us, that we ourselves did not owe, and could never have owed had he never undertaken in our behalf. An atonement might have been needed for Adam's first offence; but if Adam and all his race, on the apostasy, ceased to be moral agents, and so ceased to be bound by the moral law to perpetual, perfect obedience, as Mr. M. maintains, (p. 50.) there was no need of an atonement for the *many offences* which have taken place since the fall: for these *many offences* are not *sins;* for where there is *no law, there is no transgression.* And *sin is not imputed where there is no law.* And thus, if we give up the law, we must give up the Gospel too; and to be consistent, become infidels complete. But,

5. If God the Creator, and moral Governor of the world, was originally an absolutely perfect Being: and if he deserved the supreme love and the perfect obedience of his creature man before the fall, and if he deserves the same since the fall; and if we, retaining our original natural faculties, by which before the fall man was a moral agent, remain the same still; then may we consistently believe the bible to be the word of God. For, on these hypotheses, the divine law may be vindicated, which, relative to fallen man, and considered as unregenerate and Christless, says, *cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.* And if this law was worthy of God, then it might be worthy of God to appoint his Son *to be made a curse, to redeem us from the curse of the law.* But of this I have spoken particularly heretofore[y]; and so need not enlarge. Therefore,

y *Essay on the nature and glory of the Gospel.* Sect. III. and IV. To which essay I am constrained so frequently to refer the reader, in order to avoid republishing things which I have already written in that book.

We proceed to explain and prove the proposition before laid down, viz. That *impenitent, self-righteous, Christless sinners, are under the curse of the law of God; but this is inconsistent with their being in covenant with God, in good standing in his sight. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse,* &c. And,

1. By *sin* is meant, 'any want of conformity unto, or transgression of the law of God." This definition of sin, which is given by *the assembly of divines at Westminster*, is taken out of those two texts. 1 John iii. 4. *Sin is a transgression of the law.* Gal. iii. 10. *Cursed is every one, that continueth not in all things,* &c.

2. By *the law*, is meant, God's holy law, which requires holiness, and nothing but holiness. For if the law of God required sin, then sin would be not only 'a transgression of,' but also 'a conformity unto' the law of God; an absurdity essential to Mr. M.'s scheme. An absurdity his scheme can no sooner get rid of, than *the Ethiopian can change his skin.*

The holiness required in the divine law is summed up in love. 'The sum of the ten commandments is, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, &c. and thy neighbour as thyself.' So we were taught by our catechism, when we were children. Nor am I able to express my sentiments with more plainness and precision on the subject, than was done in my former piece. p. 25, 26. 'The law of Moses, which was the rule of duty in the covenant into which the Israelites entered, required nothing but holiness. That covenant which was externally exhibited, and externally entered into, was so far from being a graceless covenant, that it required nothing but true grace and real holiness; nothing but love, with all its various exercises and fruits, in heart and life; *love to God and man*; of this we are expressly assured by one who came from God, and infallibly understood the nature of that dispensation. Mat. xxii. 36—40. *Master, which is the great commandment of the law?* said a Pharisee to our Saviour, referring to the law of Moses. *Jesus said unto him, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,* &c. *this is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* Thus

he had answered the Pharisee's question. But he proceeded to add another sentiment, which overthrew the Pharisaic scheme by the roots. *On these two commands hang all the law and the prophets:* for if the law obliged the Jew to perform every duty in a holy manner, out of love; and required no other kind of obedience but this; if *all the law and the prophets hung on these two commands;* so that radically love was all; so that this holy love was *the fulfilling of the law,* (Rom. xiii. 8. 10.;) then the Pharisees, who were entirely destitute of this, were equally destitute of that kind of religion required in the Mosaic law, and so their scheme was torn up by the roots. It is not only a fundamental maxim in the scripture scheme of religion, that *love is the fulfilling of the law;* but it is expressly affirmed, that without love the highest gifts, and the greatest attainments, the most expensive deeds, and the most cruel sufferings, are nothing, and will profit nothing. The apostle Paul carries the point so far as to say, *Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, I am as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal;* as destitute of true and real virtue. *And though I have the gift of prophesy, and understand all mysteries, and have all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have no charity, I am nothing.* And to carry the point as high as it can possibly be carried, he adds; "and though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." For in his view charity, or love, was the sum total of all virtue. Therefore, where there is no love, there is no virtue: not the least degree of conformity to God's nature and law.' For the apostle never dreamt, that that self-love which reigns in the hearts of devils, and of wicked men, was any part of that charity in which he made all true virtue to consist. For then it could not have been said of the vilest sinner, that he *hath no charity;* whereas the apostle supposes this might be true, of some eminent professors, who even gave *all their goods to feed the poor, and their bodies to be burned,* that they *had no charity.* Besides, if that self-love is a part of what the divine law requires, then that which is the principle of all enmity against the Deity, is mat-

ter of duty: than which, nothing can be more absurd [z]. But to proceed:

3. By a *sinner*, in the proposition, is not meant merely one that has sinned, and does sin every day, for this is true of saints. But by a *sinner*, is meant, one who is wholly destitute of that holiness which is required in God's law; one who has been born only of the flesh, and so is only flesh: who hath not been *born of the spirit*, and so hath *not the spirit of Christ*; whose character is given by the Holy Ghost, in Rom. viii. 7, 8. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be: so then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." For that the Holy Ghost meant to comprehend all unregenerate sinners, is evident from the next words. ver. 9. "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the spirit of God dwell in you." So then all those, in whom the spirit of God dwelleth not, are in the flesh; which is the character of every Christless sinner. For *if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his*. So that by a *sinner* is meant, one who is dead in sin, and an enemy to God. A character, in the sight of God, infinitely criminal; as is evident from this, that his law dooms persons of this character to eternal misery; which is a punishment infinitely dreadful.

4. By an *impenitent self-righteous* sinner, is meant a sinner who being really of the character just stated, yet instead of confessing and forsaking, is habitually disposed to *cover his sins*, and *justify himself in his wickedness*. Even as our first parents covered their nakedness with fig-leaves, and did all they could to hide themselves from God, and said all they could to justify themselves. The last words which Adam spake when called before his Judge, previous to the sentence

z When it is said, *thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*, this neither justifies the selfish spirit of wicked men, nor requires the exercise of a like temper with respect to their neighbour; but only teaches us that as our neighbour's welfare is worth as much as our own, (*cæteris paribus*,) so it ought to be as dear to us, as our own ought to be. Even as it is among the angels in heaven, and as it must always be in creatures under the perfect government of pure benevolence. For this will be exercised towards beings, in proportion to their true worth. See President *Edwards on the nature of true virtue*.

passed upon him, were designed to excuse himself, and to lay the blame upon God, who had given him such a tempter; and upon her who had tempted him. The words are very remarkable. *The woman, which thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.* And yet Mr. M. represents Adam in these words, as making 'a full confession of his guilt,' (p. 17.) and as being so humbled, 'as that he was prepared to receive a discovery of redeeming mercy with all his heart.' (p. 47.) It is a dangerous thing to flatter sinners into a good opinion of themselves. Adam first covered his nakedness with fig-leaves, before God came to call him to an account: for he could not endure to see himself. And when God came he fled, and *he hid himself from the presence of the Lord amongst the trees of the garden*: for he could not endure to be seen by God. *For he that doth evil hateth the light.* And when he was forced to come forth, and appear before his Judge, he came with guile in his mouth, saying, *I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.* For it was not the nakedness of his body, but a guilty conscience, which made him hide himself. But he could not bear to own his sin. He dreaded to have it brought into view: and when closely examined and pinched to the very heart, so that he could not conceal the fact which he had done; yet then he would cunningly put into his confession, every extenuating circumstance, that as much as possible the blame might be cast off from himself, wherever else it might fall. Ungrateful wretch! to blame his kind Creator, and bountiful benefactor! *The woman, which thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.* Nothing is owned, but merely the external act; the bad intention, the proud, wicked, rebellious heart, is kept out of view; their aspiring to be *as God's*; their believing the serpent's lies before the God of truth, &c. &c. But here we have a specimen of the true nature of impenitence. This disposition to *cover their sin* took place in our first parents on their fall, and it has spread through all their guilty race. And mankind have proceeded so far, as even to invent new schemes of religion, not revealed in, but contrary to the holy Scriptures, to cover their sins and to justify themselves in their wickedness. Nor may it be amiss

to mention one or two schemes of this sort, that we may see how the charge exhibited in the divine law against the sinner is evaded, and himself freed from blame, and justified in his own conscience. Thus,

The charge exhibited in God's holy law against the sinner is, that *he sins and deserves eternal damnation, for not continuing in all things written in the book of the law to do them.* But 'the sum of the ten commandments is, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; and thy neighbour as thyself.' The Arminian pleads, and says, no man can be obliged to keep this law. For no man can exercise principles which he has not. For that implies a contradiction [a]. But we have lost our power 'of yielding perfect obedience in Adam. We cannot love God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves. We are not to blame for not doing what we cannot do. And therefore, we are not to blame, nor do we deserve the *curse for not continuing in all things written in the book of the law to do them.* This law is too severe for a fallen world. Christ has died for us; and so the law is abated. And if we do as well as we can, we shall be saved. For it would be unjust for God to require more of us than we can do, and then damn us for not doing.' Thus they reason, and thus they believe, and thus their sins are covered even from the sight of their own consciences, and they stand justified in themselves.—Again,

The charge exhibited in God's holy law against the sinner is, that *he sins, and deserves eternal damnation for not continuing*

a By *a principle of love* is meant, *a disposition to love, or a heart to love.* But to say, I have no heart to love God, and therefore I am not obliged to love him, is to say, that the more depraved I am the less to blame I am. He who has no heart at all to honour his father and his mother, is, on this hypothesis, blameless. Let the parents be ever so worthy, if the child has no heart to love and honour them, he is free. So a dishonest man, who has no heart to pay his debts, is not obliged; and a covetous niggard, who has no heart to give to the poor, is not bound. For on this hypothesis, our inclination is our rule of duty, and not the law of God. Not what is right and fit, and as such is required by God, the sole Monarch of the universe, is my duty; but only that which suits my own heart. So Pharoah said, *Who is the Lord? I know not the Lord, nor will I obey his voice.* Pharoah had no principle of love and obedience, and so he was not obliged. So he felt. But the God of the Hebrews imputed it to him for sin.

in all things written in the book of the law to do them.—But, 'the sum of the ten commandments is, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself.'—The Antinomian pleads, and says, 'this law is not in force with respect to fallen man at all: and so I am not in the least to blame for not continuing in all things written in it. For to love that character of God which is exhibited in his law, is the same thing as to love my own misery. But to love my own misery is to take pleasure in pain; which is an express contradiction, and in its very nature absolutely impossible; and even inconsistent with my continuing to exist as a sensible being, and a moral agent. And besides, it is contrary to the law of God, which requires me to love myself. That law, therefore, which was given to Adam in innocence, and which obliged him to love that character of God which was exhibited in it, is entirely set aside since the fall; and is binding on no child of Adam, more or less, as a rule of duty. For it is not the duty of any one, to love that character of God which is exhibited in the moral law. Nay, it is now, since the fall, contrary to the law of God to do it. For the law of God requires us to love ourselves; but to love that character of God which is exhibited in the moral law, is the same thing as to love our own misery. And, therefore, instead of its being a duty, it is a sin repugnant to the law of God, to love that character of God which is exhibited in the moral law; and so it ought not to be done.—Moreover, no unregenerate unbeliever can love that character of God which is revealed in the Gospel, because he doth not know it. For an unknown object cannot be loved. For to love an object of which we have no idea, is to love nothing, which is a contradiction, and in its own nature absolutely impossible. Wherefore, before Christ is discovered to the soul by the Spirit of God, while unregenerate, no man is in duty bound to love either the character of God, exhibited in the law, or the character of God revealed in the Gospel. Nothing, therefore, remains for unregenerate unbelievers to do, as their present duty, but to reform their external practice, use the means of grace, and strive and do their utmost, as unregenerate sinners may do, while such. Of such therefore it may

be said, that they forsake all known sin, and practise all known duty. Such then, who are come to a fixed resolution thus to do, are qualified to enter into covenant with God, and to attend sealing ordinances. For their being destitute of faith, repentance and love, is their calamity, but not their sin.'—Thus Antinomians reason, thus they believe, and thus their sins are covered, even from the sight of their own consciences, and they stand justified in themselves. And thus we see, what is meant by *an impenitent, self-righteous* sinner, viz. a sinner obstinate in his disaffection to the Deity, who covers his sins, and justifies himself in his wickedness. To proceed:

5. By a *Christless* sinner is meant, a sinner who doth not receive, but doth in his heart reject Jesus Christ; and so is not interested in him, and the blessings purchased by him; and so remains at present under the curse of the law and the wrath of God, as truly and really as if Christ had never died; according to those words in John iii. 18. 36. *He that believeth not is condemned already;* and *the wrath of God abideth on him.* But, in this sense, every impenitent self-righteous sinner, is a Christless sinner; for this plain reason, because they do not receive, but reject Christ. As it is written, Luke v. 31. *The whole need not a physician, but the sick.* For sinners never feel their want of Christ, or look to God through him for pardon in those things in which they justify themselves; or for divine assistance in those things which they think themselves not bound in duty to do. For instance, an Arminian, as he does not think himself to blame for not loving God with all his heart; so he never means to ask pardon of God in the name of Christ, as being to blame for this. He only blames himself, when he neglects to do as well as he can in his own sense of the phrase; and feels guilt and need of pardon only in these instances. But as to the law of perfection, as he thinks himself not bound by that, so he thinks himself not to blame for not continuing in all things written in the book of the law to do them; and so no atonement, no sanctifier, no repentance, no pardon are needed in this case. So again, an Antinomian, as he doth not believe it to be his duty to love that character of God which is

exhibited in his holy law; so he never confesseth his sin in not doing it, or asks pardon of God, or dreams that he needs any pardon in this case; or any Redeemer to atone for this sin, or any Sanctifier to enable him to do this duty. For, if it is not his duty to love that character of God which is exhibited in his law, then he needs no assistance to do it. For we need divine assistance only to enable us to do our duty. And if it is not his duty to love that character of God which is exhibited in his holy law, then he is guilty of no sin in not loving it; and so needs no Christ, no atonement, no repentance, no pardon in the affair: and thus, that Christ, that pardon, that grace, which are offered in the Gospel, he doth not need; and so doth not receive, but reject. Yea, he rejects all as an abuse. For, to tell a sinner he needs a pardon in that in which he justifies himself, will affront him; he will think himself abused; he will think himself implicitly charged with guilt, in that in which he is not guilty. And so instead of desiring the pardon, he will reject the offer as an abuse. And thus do all impenitent, self-righteous sinners, with respect to that pardon, and to that sanctifying grace, which the Gospel offers. As they need neither the one nor the other, so they reject both, with all their hearts. *For the whole need not a physician, but the sick.*

And in every instance in which men justify themselves, they depend, so far as they have any dependance, for acceptance in the sight of God, not on the atonement of Christ, but on their own innocence. For their plea is, NOT GUILTY. Here they join issue; and appeal to the judgment-seat of God. Luke xviii. 9—13. And therefore,

If the divine law doth require mankind to *be perfect, as our Father which is in heaven is perfect*, notwithstanding our fallen state: if the law of God requires perfection of us as much as it did of Adam; if we are to blame, and deserve eternal death, for *not continuing in all things*, as really as Adam did for eating the forbidden fruit; and if, on this hypothesis, and in this view, *Christ was made a curse to redeem sinners from this curse*; yet, if we plead NOT GUILTY; if we affirm that we are not bound by this law; if we affirm that in our fallen state it is not possible that we should be bound by it; if we join is-

sue on this point, and appeal to the judgment of God; if God brings us in GUILTY, at the great day, it will be too late then to *shift our plea*. It will be too late to say, that our dependance was on the atonement of Christ. For it may be retorted, 'If you were not guilty, you needed no atonement. But this was your plea, NOT GUILTY. And you appealed to the judgment-seat of God. It is too late, therefore, now to pretend you depended on the atonement. Your first plea precludes this.' They must therefore have their trial, and stand or fall, for eternity, on their first plea of NOT GUILTY. And therefore it will come to pass, that every impenitent, self-righteous sinner will be condemned, unless they can make their first plea good, at the bar of God. If the Judge will give up his law, they may be acquitted. But if he abides by what is written, viz. *As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; as it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them*; there will be no hope in their case, at that day. And therefore, all who, either on the Arminian, or on the Antinomian, or on any other plan, do in heart reject the perfect law of God, for their rule of life in this world, will perish for ever in the next.

And thus we see what is meant by *an impenitent, self-righteous, Christless sinner*. Now in the proposition it is said, that 'impenitent, self-righteous, Christless sinners, are *under the curse* of the law of God.' But,

6. By the curse of the law is meant, the curse threatened in the law of God; even all the curses written in God's book, comprising 'all the miseries of this life, and death itself, and the pains of hell for ever.'

7. When it is said, that they are under this curse, it is intended, that they are already condemned to all this by the law of God, and are liable to have the curse executed in its utmost rigour, i. e. to be struck dead, and sent to hell, at any moment. They are reprieved, moment by moment, by the sovereign pleasure of their Judge.

That Christless sinners are thus under the curse of the law, is evident, not only from the tenour of the law itself, but also from the whole course of the divine conduct. For accord-

ing to this rule God hath dealt with Christless sinners in all ages of the world. As to *the miseries of this life*, he inflicts them upon them according to his sovereign pleasure. As to *death itself*, he inflicts it just when he pleases. And as soon as the Christless sinner is dead, in an instant he is in hell, and must endure *the pains of hell for ever*. Therefore, from the tenour of the divine law, and of the divine conduct, it is evident, that God is at liberty, with respect to them, to kill and damn any Christless sinner, at what moment he pleases. And therefore he is not bound not to do so. And therefore there is no covenant between God and the sinner existing, obliging God to bestow any favour on any one Christless sinner now in the world: but he may strike dead and send to hell, justly and without breach of covenant, any Christless sinner who draws the breath of life. Thus in this sense, *impenitent, self-righteous, Christless sinners, are under the curse of the law.*

8. And this is true of self-righteous, Christless sinners, without exception, as the apostle affirms, *As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse.* Be they circumcised Jews, or baptised Gentiles; or be they both circumcised and baptised too, as doubtless many were in the churches of Galatia, to whom he was writing; yet neither their circumcision, nor their baptism, at all altered the case. For the circumcised and the uncircumcised, the baptised, and the unbaptised, are all equally under the curse of the law, if of a self-righteous character. For they reject Christ, and so can have no interest in him; as by divine constitution none are interested in him, but those who receive him. John i. 12. and iii. 18. And therefore, they must stand or fall by mere law. But the law says, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things.*

The law doth not say, 'cursed is every uncircumcised Gentile;' nor doth the law say, 'cursed is every unbaptised Pagan:' but thus it is written, 'cursed is every one:' be he Jew, or Gentile; be he Christian, or Pagan; be he circumcised, or baptised, or neither; if he be self-righteous, and Christless, he is cursed. For these things alter not the case at all. Rom. ii. 25. 28, 29. *For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep*

the law; but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly: and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God. Therefore, baptised sinners, if they are Christless, are as much under the curse of the law, as those who are unbaptised: and so, are as liable to 'all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever.' And God is as much at liberty to strike dead and send to hell, at any moment, self-righteous, Christless sinners who are baptised, as those who are unbaptised. He is not bound by covenant to the one, any more than to the other. But, as to life, and to the outward means of salvation and to the strivings of the spirit, he is at perfect liberty to *have mercy on whom he will have mercy.* This is certain from the whole tenour of the divine conduct. For we all know, that baptised sinners are as liable to sudden death as the unbaptised. And when they die, there is an end to all the outward means of salvation, and inward strivings of the Spirit, and nothing before them but the pains of hell for ever. So that there is no covenant between God and them in the way; there is nothing of this kind to hinder; but God is at perfect liberty to execute the curse of the law, on any Christless sinner, at any moment he pleases. For they are all in his hands, held up over hell by the thread of their lives, justly condemned, at his sovereign disposal. And accordingly, he lets one drop into hell now, and another then, just as he pleases, from day to day, from hour to hour, continually. And this hath been his constant course of conduct in all ages past. And thus every Christless sinner is under the curse of the law. But here it may be inquired, for what crime, or crimes, are they thus, by the law of God, sentenced to eternal wo? To which the answer is plain. For,

9. This curse, self-righteous Christless sinners are sentenced unto by the divine law, for not yielding a perfect obedience to it, continually, every day. Cursed is every one that *continueth not in all things.* So that the law of perfection is binding on the unregenerate, Christless sinner. And in the

judgment of him, whose judgment is always according to truth, they deserve eternal wo, for every instance of defect, in thought, word, or deed; in matter or manner. And that whether they were from eternity elected to salvation, or not; and whether Christ died with an absolute design to save them, or not; and whether they enjoy the strivings of God's spirit, or are given up to their own hearts' lusts: yea, and whether they enjoy the benefit of a written revelation, or not. Rom. i. 18—21. *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. So that* even the heathen *are without excuse; because when they knew God,* only by the light of nature and tradition, *they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful.* Rom. iii. 9. *For we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.* ver. 19. *That every mouth may be stopped, and* ALL THE WORLD *may become guilty before God.* For the curse extends to every one, to every Christless sinner of Adam's race. So that the divine law is binding on fallen man, previous to the consideration of the grace of the Gospel. And mankind are under so great obligations to perfect obedience, that in the judgment of him, *who is over all God blessed for ever,* they deserve eternal wo, for any one defect for not continuing in all things. For such is the infinite dignity of the Deity, such his infinite worthiness of supreme love and universal obedience, in being what he is in himself, and our Creator, that on these original grounds, it is infinitely criminal not to love him with all our hearts, and obey him in every thing. Nor doth our original apostacy in Adam, or our present depravity, or our guilt and exposedness to eternal destruction, exempt us from the divine law, as our rule of duty, or from its curse for every transgression. Nor is God obliged in justice to grant us any relief: for this law itself is the rule of justice; holy, just, and good. Rom. vii. 12.

Thus stands the matter in the sacred writings. This divinity how new soever it may appear to those who never before attended to it, was taught of old by Moses, Deut. xxvii. and afterwards by the apostle Paul, Gal. iii. 10. or rather the God of Israel is the true author of this system. It was of old revealed, in the law of Moses: it was afterwards honour

ed with the highest honours, on the cross, by the blood of God's own Son. And it was considered as fundamental in that scheme of religion which the apostles preached and wrote under divine inspiration. And to be an enemy to this law, is to be an enemy to God himself, who is its author, and whose image it bears; and to his Son, who died to do it honour.

To say that this law ceases to be binding, is to say, that God ceases to be God, or that we cease to be his creatures. For if God is God, and we are his creatures, we ought to glorify him as God, and pay the honour to him that creatures owe to their Creator, unless he has done something to forfeit our love and obedience, or we cease to be moral agents. But to say that the supreme Majesty of heaven and earth has hurt his character, by any part of his conduct, is to say, that he is not an absolutely perfect Being: which is the same as to say that he is not God. Nor can we throw the blame off from ourselves, by saying, that we cease to be moral agents, without casting it on our Maker. For either he is to blame for continuing this law in force, armed with its curse; or we are to blame for breaking this law, and deserve the threatened wo. And to say that it is not in force, is expressly to contradict divine revelation, which says, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* But,

10. For God in his holy law to require holiness, and nothing but holiness, of the Christless sinner, and curse him for the least defect, is inconsistent with requiring of him something besides holiness, viz. sin; and promising by covenant, to bless him with great blessings, on condition he performs the sinful action required. For this is to bless, and to curse the same man, at the same time, for the same action. Those very actions of the Christless sinner, 'who hath no righteousness but his own, in which to appear before God; which by the law he is under, justly deserve, and really expose him to present damnation; cannot, at the same time, qualify him, in the sight of the same God, (considered as searcher of hearts,) for any blessings whatever. For that which merits God's eternal curse, considered in itself, cannot, considered in itself,

qualify for God's blessing: unless that which is in itself infinitely odious in the sight of God, is a meet qualification for a token of the divine favour. Besides, he who is by divine constitution, at this present moment, liable to be struck dead and sent to hell, without time to breathe one breath more, for doing as he does; cannot by divine constitution, be entitled to any one blessing by those doings; for this would imply two divine constitutions, in their own nature inconsistent, both in force at the same time, the one cursing, and the other blessing, the same sinner, at the same time, for the same action. Which is the same thing, as to suppose a thing to be, and not to be, in the same sense, at the same time: which is an express contradiction.

Objection. If this reasoning is just, then God is at liberty to kill and damn all the ungodly now at this present time before the elect are called in; and so before Christ has *seen his seed*, and the *travail of his soul*. And so God was at liberty to have killed and damned every unregenerate sinner in the congregation of Israel, while in Egypt; and so the promise to Abraham, that at the end of 430 years his seed should be brought out of Egypt, might have never been fulfilled. Or he might have killed and damned every unregenerate sinner, in any period afterwards; and the very ancestors of the Messiah himself might have been cut off. And so that great promise to Abraham, *in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*, might have never been accomplished.

Answer. Christ Jesus may have a covenant right to *see his seed*, and *the travail of his soul*; and yet the self-righteous sinner may be under the curse of the law, in perfect consistency. Both these are Scripture doctrines, and both are perfectly harmonious. God may not be at liberty, with respect to Christ Jesus, to kill and damn every unregenerate sinner now in the world; because this would be inconsistent with his promise to him: but yet, with respect to unregenerate sinners themselves, God is at liberty; because God hath made no promise to unregenerate sinners, as such, by which they can any one of them now on earth claim a covenant right, to an exemption from the curse of the law, one single moment.

Again,

Abraham might have a covenant right to a posterity, in number like the stars and like the sands, because God promised this to him; and so, on the same ground, he might have a covenant right to the land of Canaan, and to all the blessings comprised in God's covenant with him; and yet such of his posterity as refused to walk in his steps, and rejected the covenant of grace, and remained under the curse of the law, might have for their parts no covenant right to any one blessing; but rather lie exposed to all the curses written in God's book. And that this was in fact the case, is plain from the whole tenour of Lev. xxvi. Deut. xxvii. and xxviii.

Now, if these things are true, then it will follow,

1. That Christless sinners, as they have no covenant right to *any good*, being by the curse of the law already sentenced to *all evil*; so all the good which they do receive from God, before they are united to Christ by faith, are, as to them, the fruits of the mere sovereign grace of God, which he is at liberty, with respect to them, to continue or take away at pleasure. Thus it is as to life and all the comforts of life. And thus it is as to all the outward means of salvation, and the inward strivings of the spirit. Every Christless sinner being under the curse of the divine law, God is at full liberty, with respect to them, to strike them dead, and send them to hell at any moment; and so put an eternal end to *all the good* which they enjoy, and let in *all evil* upon them like a flood.—See this sentiment illustrated at large through the 20th chap. of Ezekiel. And if this is true, then,

2. The carnal, unregenerate, Christless Israelites, under the Mosaic dispensation, being under the curse of their law, agreeable to Deut. xxvii. 26. and Gal. iii. 10. had, considered as such, no covenant right to one blessing of the Abrahamic covenant, no, not so much as to draw a breath, or live one moment in the promised land where all the peculiar blessngs of that dispensation were to be enjoyed; but God was at full and perfect liberty, with respect to them, to strike them dead, and send them to hell at any moment; and so for ever separate them from that good land, and from all the worldly good things and religious advantages, which were

there to be enjoyed. And on this hypothesis, and on this hypothesis alone, can the divine conduct toward that people be vindicated. For in fact he always did strike dead and send to hell impenitent sinners, under that dispensation at what time he pleased, according to his own sovereign pleasure, just as he hath done ever since. And that he had a right so to do, by the constitution which they were under, is evident from Lev. xxvi. Deut. xxvii. and xxviii. and Ezek. xx.

And accordingly we may observe, that by the divine appointment, the whole congregation of Israel were obliged to acknowledge this as soon as ever they entered into the holy land, in a most public, solemn, and affecting manner, saying, with united voices, AMEN. Deut. xxvii. 2—26. And as soon as they entered into the holy land they did acknowledge it, according to the divine appointment. Josh. viii. 30—35. So that while in an impenitent, unpardoned state, they by their own acknowledgment were under the curse of their law, at the sovereign mercy of their God. And thus the Mosaic dispensation was *of old* understood; but in later ages, the Pharisees by their false glosses put another sense upon their whole law, justifying themselves, and supporting their claims of having *God for their Father*, whereby the nation were prepared to reject the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Whereas, had they retained the ancient meaning of their law like a schoolmaster, it might have led them to Christ. As this view of things, if agreeable to truth, will without more ado settle the present controversy; so it is worthy of a particular consideration.

3. No unregenerate Christless sinner hath, as such, any right, in entering into covenant, to promise and engage 'to obey the whole will of God *by divine assistance*.' Because they have no title to 'the divine assistance,' for any one holy act. Indeed, it is their duty to 'obey the whole will of God;' and they are justly liable, in the judgment of him whose judgment is according to truth, to the *curse* threatened, if they *continue not in all things*; and that on the foot of mere law, which promiseth no assistance at all to any sinner. And while sinners reject Christ and the grace of the Gospel, they

have by the divine constitution, no title to any inward assistance of the Holy Spirit at all, on the foot of the covenant of grace. *For all the promises of God are in Christ Jesus, yea, and in him amen.* 2 Cor. i. 20. But as to those who are out of Christ, they are *under the law;* and *sin hath dominion over them.* Rom. vi. 14. This is their standing, and this is their true and real state. They are bound to perfect obedience. They are considered as moral agents. They are held to be *without excuse.* Rom. i. 21. They stand *guilty before God.* Rom. iii. 19. They reject the grace of the Gospel. Eternal death is threatened for every transgression, by the divine law. Gal. iii. 10. And the Gospel doth not *make void,* but *establish the law.* Rom. iii. 31. As it is written, *he that believeth not is condemned already,* and *the wrath of God abideth on him.* John iii. 18. 36. And so every impenitent, Christ-rejecting sinner, lies at the sovereign mercy of God; as it is written, Rom. xi. 7. *The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.*

Death and damnation may fill them with terror, and beget reformations, tears, vows, and promises; and so, in the language of the apostle, they may *bring forth fruit unto death.* For DEATH coming into the view of their consciences, begets all the religious exercises of their hearts, and is the father of the children they bring forth. And this, according to St. Paul, is the state of all those who are *married to the law.* For *sin* still *hath dominion over them* while *under the law.* But when once they are *married unto Christ,* they become *temples of the Holy Ghost,* and so now they *bring forth fruit unto God.* God is the Father of all the holy exercises of their hearts, he *works in them to will and to do,* and so all Christian graces are not only called, but in reality are *the fruits of the Spirit.* Law, death, and hell, will not beget one holy exercise in an unregenerate heart; rather they will irritate the corruption of the carnal mind. Rom. vii. 5. 8. 9. Hence the sinner who, while ignorant of law, death, and hell, hath a good heart, as he imagines; when these come into view his goodness is lost, his heart grows worse; and so far as he can discern, he grows worse and worse, until all his hope of acceptance with God, on the foot of law, languishes

and dies. So that *the law which was ordained unto life*, and by which life was originally to be obtained, he finds *to be unto death*; as it is written, Rom. vii. 8, 9. *Sin taking occasion by the commandment* raged the more, *wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once*, and had a good opinion of myself: *but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.* For it is not the design of God by legal conviction to make the heart better, or so much as to excite one holy thought, or holy desire in the unregenerate sinner; but rather to give such light to the conscience, as that all those thoughts and desires which used to be accounted holy, may appear to have no holiness in them, but to be of a nature contrary thereunto: to the end that the sinner who is in fact dead in sin, and at enmity against God, may come to know the truth; and so find himself condemned, lost, and undone by the very law by which he sought and expected life. Thus, as by the covenant of works, sinners have no title to any divine assistance; so while unregenerate, God doth in fact never assist them to one holy act. Nor under genuine conviction do they seem to themselves to grow better, but on the contrary to grow worse and worse, until they find themselves perfectly destitute of every good thought, and of every good desire, and in a state of mind 'wholly opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil,' in the language of our confession of faith: or in the more accurate and expressive language of Scripture, until they find themselves *dead in sin*, and at *enmity against God*; i. e. until they see themselves to be as in fact they are, and as in fact they always were before they saw it. But to see themselves dead in sin, and enemies to God, and wholly inexcusable, and altogether criminal in being so, and on this foot justly condemned, is what, above all things, impenitent, self-justifying sinners are averse unto. And therefore their hearts, instead of concurring to promote this conviction, do resist the light, and twist and turn every possible way to evade it: and often even rise and fight against it, with horrid blasphemous thoughts. And it is seldom that awakened sinners are brought to a thorough convic-

tion [b]. More generally they have some partial conviction, and some short terrors, and then false humiliations, and then false light and joy, which lasts a while, and then all their inward religion is at an end. Or else, without receiving any comfort true or false, they gradually lose their convictions, and go to sleep again as secure as ever. *For straight is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it.* But to return,

If self-righteous, Christless sinners, while under the curse of the law, have no title to divine assistance for any one holy act; and if, as was before proved, the divine law requires holiness and nothing but holiness; then they have no warrant to 'enter into covenant to obey the whole will of God *by divine assistance*.' It is true, the Gospel offers pardon to impenitent, self-righteous sinners, for not continuing in all things written in the book of the law to do them: but impenitent, self-righteous sinners, plead NOT GUILTY, in manner and form, as set forth in the divine law: and so reject the pardon offered. And it is true, the Gospel offers the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit to impenitent, self-righteous sinners, to enable them to love that character of God which is exhibited in his law, and which is honoured on the cross of Christ; but they do not desire to love it, and therefore the assistance offered is rejected. Now when they have thus rejected the only assistance which God ever offered, to obey the very law which he hath given to be the rule of their lives for them, under these circumstances, 'to enter into covenant to obey the whole will of God *by divine assistance*,' is a piece of hypocrisy suited to the character of none, but such as are in fact totally depraved;' and yet, at the same time, near, or quite *totally blind*, as to their true character and real state.

A woman, however poor and low in the world before marriage, and however insufficient to be trusted by any of her neighbours; yet no sooner is she married to a rich man who

b 'It is not enough for men to see that they can do nothing of themselves. Men may say *that*, when they only find need of assistance, and not of the *infusion of a principle of grace* into them.'

Stoddard's Safety. p. 183. Edit. 3.

loves her, and whom she takes delight to obey and honour, but with his approbation she may trade largely at any merchant's shop for any thing she needs, and may warrantably promise, 'by the assistance of her husband,' to make good pay; nor will the merchant, who knows her husband's riches, and his love to her, and his approbation of her conduct, be backward to trust her. And thus it is with the poor bankrupt sinner, who is in himself *not sufficient for one good thought*, as in him there *dwelleth no good thing*, as soon as he is married to Christ Jesus, *in whom all fulness dwelleth*, and of *whose fulness he receives, and grace for grace*, he may now enter into covenant with God, and warrantably promise, 'by the assistance of Christ Jesus,' to love God, and walk in all his ways with an upright heart. But should a woman of an adulterous heart enter into covenant with a man of honour and of a great estate before the priest, and as soon as the ceremony was over, even on the very same day, leave his bed and board, and run off, and prostitute herself to her former gallants, and refuse to return, and continue to refuse, although invited thereto by her husband, yea, obstinately refuse, notwithstanding repeated invitations and repeated offers of pardon and forgiveness, until he being justly provoked should advertise her in all the public papers, and forbid all to trust her on his account, for that he would hold himself unobliged to pay any of her debts, or to afford her 'any assistance,' until her perverse heart should be humbled, and she should confess her iniquity, and justify him in this token of his displeasure, and ask forgiveness for her crimes, and return to her duty with true matrimonial affection: and should she, on seeing what her husband had done, declare, that 'to love such a husband is the same thing as to love to be advertised as a run-away in the public papers, which is to love disgrace itself, which is in its own nature impossible, and even contrary to the law of God, which requires us to love ourselves; in this view, therefore, I can never return, nor is it my duty to return; for I ought to have a regard to my own reputation; until, therefore, he will recall this advertisement, and assume a different character, I can no more love him than I can love my own misery;' and in this temper should she go on, giving her heart to her lovers, and

making herself common to all comers, until, being overtaken with extreme poverty, she is reduced to great distress; and then, instead of returning to her husband and humbling herself before him, as in duty she is bound, should she apply to her neighbours for relief, and put on a bold face, and promise, by the 'assistance of her husband' to make good pay—would they regard her words? would they trust her on his account? Rather, would they not be filled with indignation at her impudence, and be ready to say, 'Woman, first of all make up matters with your husband, before you presume to be trusted on his account; for what warrant have you, in your present circumstances, to promise to make good pay, *by his assistance*, to which you have no title, and to which you know you have no title, and to which the public knows you have no title, by the advertisement in the public papers? No, no, thou wicked woman, thy word is not to be taken. Thou art not worth a penny in the world. The man whom thou callest thy husband, thou hast run away from, and he declares that he will hold himself unobliged to pay any of thy debts, or to grant thee the least 'assistance.' She cries, she laments bitterly, she says,—'I desire to love him, I wish I could love him, I long to love him, I try to love him, but I cannot. I do all I can to love him, but it is above my power. But this I can say, that I am willing to *do my utmost*, and I am come to *a fixed resolution* to try every day to love him, and I am willing to bind myself by the most solemn covenant to do so. And more than this, he cannot reasonably require at my hands, in my present circumstances.' Her husband happens to stand at the door, and hears all the talk, and goes off in high indignation, saying to himself, 'What! can she find a heart to love her gallants, but no heart to love me! am I so vile in her eyes! is it such an impossible task to love such an one as I am! is this more than she can do! is this more than I can justly require at her hands! am I to be pacified with her hypocritical tears, and deceitful vows! and an unreasonable man to demand more at present! shall other men thus have her whole heart, and shall I bear this contempt at her hands! far be this from me. I will assert my proper dignity; that woman shall no longer be call-

ed my wife; I will get a bill; I will put her away for ever.' Common sense would approve and justify his conduct.

Thus the most high God, whose character is perfect in beauty, without a blemish, might justly resolve, with respect to every impenitent, self-righteous, self-justifying sinner. And he might justly strike them dead, and send them to hell, in a moment. For every plea they make to justify themselves, in not loving God, casts the blame on him; even every argument they use for their justification, is to his condemnation. For if the fault is not in them, it is in him. If they are not to blame for not loving him, it is because he is not worthy of their love. For if God is in himself, and in all his conduct, absolutely perfect, even perfect in beauty, without a blemish, then we must be inexcusable, and wholly criminal in not loving him with all our hearts. And if there is the least blemish in the divine character, or in any part of his conduct, then he is not an absolutely perfect Being. That is, in other words, he is not God. The divinity of the only true and living God, is therefore denied in every self-justifying plea. Which is a crime aggravated beyond expression. A sinner, therefore, in such a temper, is an enemy to the true God, and justifies himself in it, and all his pretences to love and obedience are hypocritical; and he ought to be told it in the plainest manner. But to flatter sinners along in their self-justifying, God-condemning disposition, how much soever it may please them at present, directly tends to their eternal ruin.—But thus much is certain at least, that they have no title to 'any divine assistance;' and so have no warrant to make promises as though they had. Nor is their promise, in this view of it, of any worth, or at all to be trusted.

To conclude,

The professed design of Mr. M.'s first book was, as he declares, (p. 58.) to prove that there is 'an external covenant between God and his visible church, as such, distinct from the covenant of grace. And that those who are in it, (p. 59.) 'have a promise of the means of, and the strivings of God's holy Spirit, in order to render them effectual for salvation.' And agreeably hereunto, he has in this second book endeavoured to persuade us, that impenitent, self-righteous,

Christless sinners, (p. 65, 66.) may warrantably, 'while such, and as such,' bind themselves, in covenant 'by divine assistance to obey the whole will of God.' Whether what has been offered in the foregoing section, is sufficient to prove that this external covenant is not from heaven, but of men, is submitted to the consideration of every judicious reader.—And we are now at liberty more particularly to examine the new scheme of religion, which he has advanced in order to support his external covenant, which is to be the principal business of most of the following sections.

SECTION VI.

Rom. viii. 7, 8. *The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*

Quest. I. *Are we, as fallen creatures, at enmity against God, merely as conceiving God to be our enemy?* Or,

Quest. II. *Are we enemies only to false and mistaken ideas of God?* Or,

Quest. III. *Is the carnal mind enmity against God's true and real character, and that notwithstanding the revelation which God has made of his readiness to be revealed to us, if we repent and return to him through Jesus Christ?* If so,

Quest. IV. *What contrariety is there between the carnal mind and God's true and real character?*

ACCORDING to our author, (p. 50.) 'Adam, after the fall, before the revelation of a Mediator,' was not bound by the divine law to love God. The divine law bound him to 'punishment' for what was past; but 'its binding authority respected not his obedience,' for the time to come. For Adam by the fall ceased to be a moral agent. For it now became inconsistent with a principle essential to moral agency, to love God. For, (p. 5.) a principle of self-love is essential to us as moral agents.'—But, (p. 10.) 'to delight in God under those circumstances,

was the same thing as to delight in his own misery;' which is inconsistent with that self-love which is essential to moral agency. Therefore, (p. 10.) 'Adam by becoming guilty, was totally depraved;' being totally deprived of his moral agency, and wholly incapacitated for moral conduct. His depravity, however, was not of a criminal nature. For, (p. 12.) 'this inconsistency of love to God, with the natural principle of self-love, was the true reason, and the only reason, why Adam could not love God after the fall.' For, (p. 44.) 'could he have seen, after he had sinned, that he had still the same, or as much ground of confidence toward God as he had before, he would have continued still to exercise the same delight in the divine perfections, as he had done before.' So that he was as well disposed to love God after the fall as he was before, had he been in as good external circumstances. His different affections were entirely owing to his different external circumstances. For God was his friend before the fall. But now, (p. 9.) 'in every view it must appear to him, that God could deal no otherwise with him, but to execute the curse, unless he should act contrary to his own perfections.' And therefore, as soon as God's readiness to forgive sin was manifested, there was nothing in his heart to prevent his loving God as much as ever. And so it is with us, (p. 44.) 'There is all the reason why our hearts should return to the love of God, and confidence in him through Christ, as why Adam should love God in his primitive state. There is nothing in our fallen circumstances to prevent it.' (p. 47, 48.) *Without any new principle of grace.* For this being the true state of things, (p. 43.) 'regeneration may be wrought by light.' For as soon as we believe God's readiness to be reconciled to us, we shall love him of course. But before faith and regeneration, we are in the same state of total depravity that Adam was before the revelation of a Mediator. (p. 18.) 'Mankind at this day, antecedent to their exercising faith in Christ, are in much the same condition as Adam was after he had sinned.' Particularly, (p. 20.) 'we are under the same inability of loving God that Adam was.' And therefore, as it was not Adam's duty to love God after the fall; so the unregenerate are not bound in duty to love that character of God which

was exhibited in the moral law given to Adam; for to do so is the same thing as to love their own misery. Which to do is inconsistent with moral agency, and 'contrary to the law of God,' which requires us to love ourselves. (p. 41, 42, 43.) And the Gospel does not require us to love that character of God which is exhibited in the moral law. (p. 43.) 'For the love of God which the Gospel teacheth, is love of that divine character which is exhibited to us in a Mediator, and no other.' But this character the unbeliever hath no idea of, and so cannot love it. (p. 43.) 'To suppose that the soul sees, and loves this character, before a believing view of Christ takes place in the heart, is to suppose the soul to see and not to see at the same time.' And as we are not moral agents with respect to law or Gospel, while unregenerate and unenlightened, nor bound in duty at present to love God, believe, or repent; so the external covenant, which requires unregenerate endeavours, and promises the strivings of the Holy Spirit to render external means effectual to salvation,' comes in here to our relief. And our 'total depravity,' and our 'enmity against God,' not being of a criminal nature, are no bar in the way of our admission to sealing ordinances. And therefore, although a man who steals but a shilling, and justifies himself in it, must be debarred; yet he who is totally depraved, and an enemy to God, and justifies himself in it, may be admitted. This is the sum of Mr. M.'s scheme.—Now that we, while unregenerate, are moral agents, has been already proved. And the nature of that enmity against God, which is in the carnal mind, is to be considered in this section, which may be done in answer to the questions proposed; and then the way will be prepared to consider the nature of that reconciliation to God, to which the Gospel calls us, which is to be the subject of the next section. Now, therefore, let us attend to the questions.

Question I. *Are we, as fallen creatures, enemies to God, merely as conceiving God to be our enemy?*

Answer. As likeliness of nature lays the foundation for liking; so contrariety of nature is the original ground of dislike; or that in which enmity radically consists[e]. And there-

[e] There are some sinners who do not know enough about God, sensibly to love

fore, our enmity to God does not arise merely from conceiving God to be our enemy. Here let these things be considered:

1. If our enmity against God arises merely from conceiving him to be our enemy, if we have no contrariety of heart to God, but what arises merely from conceiving that he dislikes us; then God's dislike to us must have taken place while we were perfectly holy. Or our belief that God is our enemy, is a groundless sentiment, originally injected into the human mind by the devil, the father of lies, as Mr. Sandeman supposes; but for which, we should naturally love God, be perfectly pleased with his character, and from our childhood grow up truly friendly to him. And if either of these be true, then,

2. In order to our reconciliation to God, we need not to be born again; we need no change of nature; we only need to believe that God is become our friend: and so we may be reconciled to God by this belief. For it is an old maxim, *remove the cause and the effect will cease.* And in this view the old Antinomian scheme, relative to total depravity and regeneration, is consistent. This faith, therefore, is the first act. And by this faith we are regenerated: that is, a belief of God's

him or hate him, or to have any exercise of heart relative to him. *God is not in all their thoughts.* They never hated him in their lives, they will tell you; nor did they ever feel any love to him, or delight in him. The divine character, as yet, never came near enough to their view to give them pleasure or pain. *The fool saith in his heart, there is no God.* They wonder, therefore, what can be meant by the apostle's words, *The carnal mind is enmity against God.* Surely, say they, he does not mean, that every natural man hates God, for I never hated him in my life. For let our sinful nature be ever so contrary to God's holy nature, yet the contrariety will not be felt until the true and real character of the Holy One of Israel begins to come into clear view. *For without the law sin was dead: but when the commandment came, sin revived.* This contrariety which is between our sinful nature and God's holy nature, is the thing chiefly intended in the text. And the sense is, "The carnal mind is contrariety to the holy nature of God, as appears from this, that it is not subject to that law, which is a transcript of God's moral character, neither indeed can be, which proves the contrariety to be total, and fixed. And as the tree, such is the fruit; so then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God. For God cannot be pleased with what is contrary to his own holy nature. And therefore, upon the whole, to be carnally minded, is death." Which was the point to be proved. See Rom. viii. 6, 7, 8, 9.

love to us, removes the grounds of our enmity to him, and begets love, repentance, and every Christian grace.

Mr. Sandeman's scheme, which is nothing else than the old Antinomian scheme refined, and dressed up in a new attire, teaches, that the truth to be believed in justifying faith, is, 'that there is forgiveness with God through the atonement for impenitent sinners.' A belief of this begets hope, and love, and repentance, and every Christian grace. For on his scheme, *forgiveness takes place before repentance,* as it does necessarily on the Antinomian scheme, whatever shape it assumes. For on this scheme, as our enmity against God arises from conceiving God to be our enemy; so our love arises from conceiving God to be our friend. And therefore we must first of all conceive God to be our friend, before love can exist; and so before repentance can exist. And so justification must necessarily take place before repentance. This is a difficulty which neither the more ancient nor the later Antinomian writers know how to get rid of.

And thus faith, even that faith by which we are justified, takes place, in order of nature, before regeneration. For it is the cause of it. But the cause, in order of nature, is always before the effect. But if faith takes place before regeneration, it is in its own nature not a holy, but a graceless, unregenerate act. For it is the act of a graceless unregenerate heart. And so faith is not 'a saving *grace,* but a *saving sin.* But can we be *married* to a *holy* Saviour by an *unholy act?* By an act in its own nature, *perfectly opposite to his mediatorial character?* Can we *receive* Christ by an act of *rejection?* Can we be *united* to Christ by an act of *disunion?* Can we become *one* with Christ by *an act of sin?*—Perhaps it may be thought that Mr. Sandeman gets rid of this difficulty, by teaching that faith is not *an act;* that there is no volition, or exercise of heart implied in it. But nothing is gained, if, while we avoid one difficulty, we run upon another as great.

For, if it is not *an act;* if no volition or exercise of heart is implied in it, then we are *married to Christ,* 'without our consent;' just as Mr. Mather supposes that the Israelites, on the plains of Moab, were taken into covenant, 'without their consent.' But this is inconsistent with the very notion of

marriage; which is a transaction which implies the mutual consent of both parties. And therefore, on this scheme, the marriage union, as it takes place among mankind, could not be used, with any propriety, to represent our union to Christ by faith. For if the soul is *married* to Christ at all, the consent of our hearts must be implied. Or to use Mr. Stoddard's words, 'when the soul *marries to Christ*, he doth it with a spirit of love; this act of faith doth include all other graces. It is virtually all grace.' *Nature of conversion*, p. 19—24. See Rom. vii. 4. 2 Cor. xi. 2. Eph. v. 19. 30. John xvi. 27. But can we be married to Christ by an act of sin? But if justifying faith is the act of an unregenerate heart, dead in sin, totally depraved, then it is *an act of sin*. For as is the tree, such is the fruit; as is the fountain, such are the streams; as is the heart, such are its acts. Besides,

If justifying faith is the act of an unregenerate sinner, then it is the act of an impenitent sinner. And then pardon is, in order of nature, before repentance. And so it is not necessary, that we repent of our sins, in order to our being forgiven. Which is contrary to the whole tenour of Scripture, and to the plainest and most express declarations of Almighty God. Pray reader, stop a minute, take your bible, and turn to, and read, Lev. xxvi. 40, 41, 42. 1 Kings viii. 47—50. Ps. xxxii. 3, 4, 5. Prov. xxviii. 13. Isai. lv. 7. Jer. iv. 4. Ezek. xviii. 30, 31, 32. Luke iii. 3. and v. 31, 32. and xiii. 5. and xxiv. 47. Acts ii. 37, 38. and iii. 19. and v. 31. and x. 21. And then lay your hand on your heart, and say, does God offer to pardon impenitent sinners while such? Did the Son of God die that pardon might be granted to impenitent sinners, as such? Or can God, consistent with the Gospel, forgive the impenitent, while such, and as such, any more than if Christ never had died? If any doctrine tends to delude sinners, it is this, that they may expect pardon without repentance. They have no heart to repent; they wish to escape punishment; they hope they shall escape: if they can believe that they shall escape, it will give them joy. This doctrine is suited to give joy to an impenitent heart. But to teach impenitent sinners, that they may expect pardon, without *repentance toward God*, is as contrary to Scripture,

as it is to teach them, that they expect pardon without *faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.* This doctrine of *pardon before repentance,* had been taught; yea, it had spread far and wide. This occasioned *the assembly of divines at Westminster* expressly to assent the contrary. *Confession of faith,* chap. xv. 'Repentance is of such necessity to all sinners, that none may expect pardon without it.' In fine,

If the first act of justifying faith is an unregenerate, graceless, sinful act, so are all succeeding acts of the same faith. And if so, then to *live a life of faith on the Son of God,* as the holy apostle Paul says he did, (Gal ii. 20.) is to live a life of unregenerate, graceless, sinful acts. For it is an agreed point, that the first act, and the succeeding acts of justifying faith, are of the same nature and kind. And so a life of faith is a life of sin; a course of unregenerate graceless acts. And this graceless faith will bring forth selfish graceless fruits. All our love and joy will arise merely from self-love; in a belief that our sins are pardoned, and that God loves us. The holiness, justice, and goodness of the divine nature, exhibited in that law which is holy, just, and good, (Rom. vii. 12.) which Christ loved and honoured, living and dying; instead of appearing perfect in beauty, without a blemish, in our eyes, can never be thought of with pleasure. We never can say with *David, O, how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day.* Ps. cxix. 97. In a word, as our faith is of the Antinomian kind; so our whole hearts will be all over Antinomian. No wonder, 'ninety-nine in a hundred' of such converts are in the dark about their good estate; and feel as much need of an external, graceless covenant, as though they never had been converted.

A late writer, in order to prove, '*fide nos regenerari,* that we are regenerated by faith,' quotes Gal. iii. 26. *Ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ.* But this text speaks not of *regeneration,* but of *adoption.* Again he refers to John vi. 53. *Except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.* Just as if *eating and drinking* were acts of the *dead,* and not of the *living.* Just as if the *dead* might eat and drink while they are dead, and by so doing be made alive. However, this

is certain, that that is a dead corpse, and not a living man, which neither eats nor drinks. He who does not live a life of faith in Christ, is dead in sin. Yet still *repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*, are acts of spiritual life, and not of spiritual death.

However, it is granted that there is a kind of faith which may be exercised by a graceless, unregenerate, impenitent sinner. For such an one, although he rejects Christ Jesus with his whole heart, yet he may firmly believe that God loves him, and that his sins are forgiven, and be ravished in this belief. But the thing believed is a lie. And all the affections which result from this belief are founded in delusion. And yet, this is the very thing which is sometimes called *regeneration by faith*, and *beholding the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*. And it was one chief design of President Edwards' *Treatise concerning Religious Affections*, to show the difference between true religion and this kind of delusion. But to return:

3. If a belief that God is become our friend, without any change of nature, will reconcile us to God, then satan, *transformed into an angel of light*, is able to do the business. For when the sinner is terrified with the thoughts of death and hell, satan can bring to his mind such texts as these, *Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee. O, thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt!* And at the same time strike the sinner's imagination with a view of heaven, of God upon a throne, of Christ sitting at his right hand, till every doubt is banished, and until the sinner cries out in transport, *I believe, I believe.*——And,

4. If our enmity against God arises only from conceiving God to be our enemy, then all those graceless deluded sinners who believe that God loves them, are truly regenerate. That is, the love to God, which they experience in this belief, is true love. For, as the cause of our enmity is believing God to be our enemy; so in every instance where the cause is removed the effect will cease. But in all deluded sinners, who believe that God loves them, the supposed cause of enmity is removed, and accordingly they really think that they love God. Thus gross *Socinians*, who deny the eternity of

hell-torments, who believe the universal salvation of devils and damned, and in this belief view God as the friend of the whole intelligent system, all made up of love to his creatures, do in this view of his character, love him, and so are all of them, on this scheme, truly reconciled to God. Rather, these men, if they were instructed in these principles from their childhood, and believed them, were never totally depraved. For they always loved God. And accordingly we find they universally deny the doctrine of total depravity; and say, that it is natural for all mankind to love God; and that in fact they all would love him, were his true and real character brought into their view. And so would the devils too, on this scheme, were the divine character what the Socinians suppose it to be. And while Socinians love God, viewed as they view him; Antinomians, of the grossest sort, whose faith professedly consists in a belief that God loves them, are often full of love to God, in this view of him. And why may not Socinians and Antinomians have charity or each other? For their schemes are not so different in ality as in appearance. For both look upon God as a ovely being; and both love him; and both profess to love him, 'for the transcendent excellency of his perfections.' The one does this, because God loves all, and so loves him; the other, because, although God does not love all, yet he loves him in particular. And why is not the love of the one of as good a kind as the love of the other? And the Pharisees, concerning whom Christ declared, that *the love of God was not in them*, John v. 42. and who hated and crucified the Son of God, ought also to be received to charity, on this scheme; for they really believed that God was their father and their friend, and in this belief, they experienced this kind of love, of which we are speaking. Yea, our charity ought to be more extensive still; for,

5. On this scheme they who are totally depraved, have as much of a principle of grace, as they that are regenerate.—That is, sinners are at heart as well disposed to love God, before regeneration, as after. For after regeneration they are disposed to love God, only considered as one that loves them; and before regeneration, they are disposed to love God, con-

sidered and viewed in this light. For it is written, *sinners love those that love them;* and they need no *new principle of grace* to incline them to it. And so the unregenerate only need *light* to see that God loves them; and could they but have this *light* they would love God as much as others.

And, therefore,

6. On this scheme, satan's charge against Job, that he was at heart no better than other men, was true and just; and the high commendation which God had given of him, that there was *none like him in the earth,* was without reason. "And the Lord said unto satan, hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil? Then satan answered the Lord, and said, doth Job fear God for naught? Hast thou not made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land." As if he had said, 'no wonder he loves God, while God is so full of love and kindness to him. And who is there under the like circumstances, that would not love God as much as he does?' "But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face;" 'just as we fallen spirits have done, ever since we were turned out of heaven. And therefore this Job, who is commended as *a none such,* has in reality no more grace in his heart than we have.' And if the enmity of fallen creatures against God arises only from conceiving him to be their enemy, and their love only from conceiving God to be their friend, satan's reasoning was just. All Job's seeming superior goodness was entirely owing to the more abundant tokens of the divine love; and therefore he would have turned to be like the devil, in an instant, if God had only *touched all that he had.* He would have *cursed God to the face.*——Indeed,

7. On this scheme, Adam had no more grace before the fall than he had after; but his different affections toward the Deity were entirely owing to the different external circumstances which he was under. For, on this scheme, before the fall God loved him, and so he loved God; and after the

fall, had God continued to love him, he would have continued to love God also. For the 'true reason, and the only reason, why Adam could not love God after the fall, was because, as he thought, God was become his irreconcileable enemy. As soon as he found out his mistake, and perceived that God was ready to be reconciled, he returned to the love of his Maker, without any 'new principle of grace.' Before the fall, that principle of self-love, which, according to Mr. M. was 'essential to him as a moral agent'—'naturally inclined him to love God with all his heart as his greatest good.' And after the fall, this same principle did as naturally incline him to hate God with all his heart, as his greatest evil. p. 9. His love and his hatred arose from the very same principle. And his different affections were entirely owing to his different external circumstances. As soon, therefore, as his external circumstances were altered, and God became friendly again, he immediately returned to the love of God, without any new principle of grace; 'there was nothing in his fallen circumstances to prevent it,' (according to Mr. M.) Adam therefore, on this scheme, had no more grace before the fall than after. It is true, the fall made an alteration in his external circumstances, which different external circumstances occasioned different affections; even as it was with the Israelites at the Red sea, when Pharaoh and his hosts were drowned, and their expectations of a prosperous journey to the land of Canaan were raised very high, they were full of love, and joy, and praise: but three days after, when they came to the waters of Marah, they *murmured*: and that from the same principle from which they before rejoiced. It is true, they had different affections toward God at these different times; but 'the true and only reason,' was their different external circumstances, for they had no more grace at the one time, than at the other. And thus it was with Adam, on Mr. M.'s scheme.—Yea,

8. On this scheme, there is no essential difference between the nature of satan, and the nature of Gabriel; but their different affections, and different conduct, arise merely from the different external circumstances which they are in. For there is no higher principle than self-love in either. The one

looks on God as an enemy, and so hates him merely in that view. And the other looks upon God as a friend, and so loves him merely in that view. And thus their natures are exactly alike, and their different affections and conduct arise merely from the different external circumstances which they are under. And thus satan stands justified in his enmity against God; and thus the holy angels are degraded to a level with devils. For satan might say, 'to love God in my circumstances would be to love my own misery: but to take delight in misery, to take pleasure in pain, is a contradiction; and is in its own nature impossible. Therefore, I am not to blame. And as to the angels, who dwell in heaven, *do they fear God for naught*, in the paradise above, surrounded with every blessing? Far from it. *But let God put forth his hand now, and touch all that they have, and they will curse him to his face*, just as we do.'

Thus much in answer to the first question: and to prepare the way for the second, we may observe, that Mr. M. says, speaking of Adam after the fall, (p. 9.) 'In every view, it must appear to him that God could deal no otherwise with him, but to execute the curse, unless he should act contrary to his divine and glorious perfections.' And, p. 10. 'To delight in God, in this case, was the same thing as to delight in his own misery.' And, p. 12. 'This was the true reason, and the only reason, why Adam could not love God after the fall.' But Adam soon found he was mistaken; for it soon appeared that God knew how to open a way to pardon sinners, 'consistent with his divine and glorious perfections.'—Therefore,

Question II. *Are we, as fallen creatures, enemies only to false and mistaken ideas of the Deity?*

Answer. If we are enemies *only* to false and mistaken ideas of the Deity, then it will follow, that we have no enmity against God's true and real character, even *none at all;* but rather are in a disposition to love it as soon as known. Nor shall we need any inward influence of the Holy Spirit at all, to dispose us to the knowledge of it; for we shall not be averse to the knowledge of it, as not being at all prejudiced against it. In this case we shall not hate the light, but love

and receive it with all our hearts, of our own accord. And therefore, if the external manifestations of God's true character are sufficiently clear, we shall know it, and we shall love it. And, on this hypothesis, had God given mankind, from the beginning of the world, an external exhibition of his true character, sufficiently full and plain, all mankind would have known and loved him from the beginning of the world. So that the great and general depravity of mankind, and the wickedness which hath overspread the earth, in all ages, have been entirely owing to God's not giving a sufficient external revelation of his true and real character to the children of men. But they are not to blame for this. If there be any blame at all, it lies at his door, who hath neglected to let his true and real character be known. For had he but revealed it to mankind, they having no prejudice against it, but being naturally disposed to love it, would of course have attended to the revelation with good and honest hearts, and would have understood it, and have brought forth fruit accordingly.—How to justify the divine conduct, in this view of things, I do not know. Nor can I tell how to justify the conduct of Moses and the prophets, of Christ Jesus and his apostles, who were commissioned to reveal God's true character to men, in suffering both God, and themselves for his sake, to be hated, when things, if this scheme is true, were so circumstanced, that if they had but plainly told the truth, all would have understood it, believed it, loved and obeyed it; and they would have been the most universally beloved of any persons in the world. If mankind, with respect to God's true and real character, stand affected as Mr. Sandeman represents, even as the inhabitants of an island perishing with hunger *do*, with respect to a large importation of corn, the news of which would spread like lightning from end to end of the island, and give hope and joy to all the inhabitants at once, then had Jesus of Nazareth and his apostles plainly revealed the Father's character to mankind, the news would have spread over the earth, and would have filled the world with joy; and these bringers of good tidings had been the delight of all nations. Why then did they suffer themselves to be hated, persecuted, murdered, for nothing! Yea, for worse

than nothing! even for secreting the true and real character of God, which they were sent expressly to reveal.

To say, that they did plainly reveal God's true and real character, but mankind did not understand them right; is to say, either the revelation was not on a level with the natural capacities of mankind, and so was not plain enough, not so plain as it ought to have been to answer the end; and so these divine teachers were blame-worthy: or else their not understanding the revelation aright must be owing to their being at enmity against God's true and real character, which was revealed. For if the revelation was plain enough, and if they had no prejudice to blind their minds, they must have understood it. Nothing could have prevented a right understanding of the revelation but bad and dishonest hearts, by which they were inclined to hate the light and truth itself. For every good and honest heart would have understood the revelation, believed and loved it, and brought forth fruit. Luke viii. 15. We therefore proceed,

Question III. *Is the carnal mind enmity against God's true and real character; and that notwithstanding the plain and most express revelation, which God has made of his readiness to be reconciled to us, if we repent and return to him through Jesus Christ?*

Answer. If God would forgive us without repentance, we should like him. As in this, he would yield us every point in contest, and implicitly take the whole blame to himself. Or in other words, if God would give up his law, we would give up our enmity against him; as in this he would do as we would have him do, and implicitly become altogether such an one as we are. Or, which amounts to the same thing, if God will give up that character of himself exhibited in the moral law, and allow us to hate it, and yet love us, then we will like him; as in this he would justify us in our wickedness. But if he asserts his own dignity, abides by his law, and vindicates the honour of his character exhibited in it, and obliges us from the heart to acknowledge him to be wholly right, and ourselves to be wholly wrong, to repent and take the whole blame to ourselves, and ask forgiveness as of mere grace through Jesus Christ, then his character will not suit a carnal

mind. In a word, if God will forgive us without repentance, then we can love him without any change of nature; but otherwise our enmity will remain. For his offering pardon, in the name of Christ, upon repentance, will not pacify the heart of an impenitent, self-justifying sinner, and induce him to become a willing and obedient subject to the divine government.

Before the foundation of the world, the fall of man being foreseen, God had contrived a method in which he might, consistently with his perfections, pardon and receive to favour the true penitent. And no sooner had man fallen, but he revealed his designs of mercy to our first parents, that they might inform their posterity; and instituted sacrifices as a shadow of the great atonement. So that all mankind were under sufficient external advantages from the beginning of the world, to have known that *God is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.* And yet soon it came to pass, not only that Cain slew his brother, but that *the whole earth was filled with violence.*

After the flood, mankind in a body, soon cast off the true God, and idolatry spread over the face of the earth. *For they did not like to retain God in their knowledge.* At this time, that he might not leave himself without witness, God took one nation and set them up as a beacon on a hill, in the sight of all the nations; and to them, in the sight of all the world around them, he exhibited his true and real character, and laid them under every possible obligation to love him, and to walk in his ways, that they might be to him *for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory,* in the sight of all the nations; that they might yet have opportunity to return to the true God; but the nations around hated the God of Israel, and even the Israelites *would not hear.* Jer. xiii. 10. Yea, the Israelites cast off their God, whom they did not like, and joined with the heathen around them, in the worship of Baal, Ashtaroth, and Dagon gods, whom they did like; and this notwithstanding God himself used all external means that were proper, and the most wisely adapted, to induce them to love him, and to walk in his ways, from the day he took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, always

giving them the highest assurances of his readiness to forgive all past offences, and in the highest sense to be a God to them, if they would walk in his ways indeed; but *they would not hear*. So that after the experiments of many ages, and a great variety of means contrived and used by infinite wisdom, God was at length obliged to cast them off. But not until he had tried every external means, which, with propriety, could be tried. Not until he could say, *what more could have been done to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?* For he sent unto them all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending; and they stoned one, and killed another. At last he sent to them his only Son, and they slew him. And in them we have exhibited a true specimen of human nature, in its present fallen state[d].

Since the Jews have been cast off, God has sent the Gospel to the Gentiles, and for seventeen hundred years has been making experiments on them, as of old he did on the Jews: and such has been their opposition to God and Christ and Christianity in all ages, that agreeable to revelation made to John in the *Isle of Patmos*, the true Church of Christ hath been in circumstances, either like "a woman in travail, with a great red dragon before her, ready to devour her child as soon as born; or like a woman obliged to flee, as upon eagles' wings, into a wilderness to hide herself from the face of the dragon," Rev. xii.; or like *two witnesses prophesying in sackcloth*, who *are killed* from age to age, for the testimony they bear to God and the truth, and in whose sufferings *they that dwell upon the earth rejoice*, Rev. xi. And now after a course of the most obstinate rebellion, for almost six thousand years,

d 'As face answereth to face in water, so doth the heart of man to man.—If they were in Cain's circumstances, and God should suffer them, they would do as he did. If they were in Pharaoh's circumstances, and left of God, they would be as cruel, false, and hard-hearted, as he. If they were in the like circumstances with Doeg, though they condemn him for his hypocrisy, flattery, and cruelty, they would do every whit as bad as he. If they were in like circumstances as Judas was, whatever indignation they have against him, they would be as false and impudent, and as very traitors as he. Yea, if they were under the circumstances that the fallen angels are, they would be as very devils as they.——That original sin that reigns in every natural man is the fountain of every abomination.'

Mr. Stoddard. *Nature of Conversion*. p. 95, 96.

it is become a question among us rebels and enemies, whether we are at enmity against God's true and real character, or not! After we have cast off the true God, and set up false gods all over the earth; after we have stoned the messengers of God, and killed his prophets, and murdered his Son; and after his followers have, according to his prediction, been *hated of all men for his name's sake;* even now, after all these exercises and fruits of enmity, it is become a question, whether we are, or ever were, properly and strictly speaking, enemies to God's true and real character! So slow of heart are we to understand our own true character and real state. But that the carnal mind is enmity against God's true and real character, may be proved by these arguments, viz.

1. If the carnal mind is enmity against God himself, then the carnal mind is enmity against God's true and real character. But the carnal mind is enmity against God himself: as is asserted by the inspired apostle. For he says, *The carnal mind is enmity against God.* But to be enmity against false and mistaken notions of the Deity, is not to be enmity against God. For to hate falsehood is not to hate the truth. To hate false gods, is not to hate the true God. But that being whom Paul called God, was the true God. To deny this, is to give up the whole of divine revelation. To say, that Paul's God was not the true God, is to say that the God of the bible is not the true God.

2. That which is opposite unto a true and real transcript of the moral character of God, is opposite to his true and real character. But the carnal mind is opposite unto the divine law, which is a true and real transcript of the moral character of God. This is the apostle's argument. For in order to prove that the carnal mind is enmity against God, he says, *for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*

3. To be at enmity against false and mistaken notions of God is no sin, and deserves no punishment; but rather is virtuous and praise-worthy: for even God himself hates all false gods, and all mistaken notions about the true God. But if the Scripture account of things be true, that enmity against God and Christ, which mankind have discovered, is the most inexcusable wickedness; for it is spoken of by our blessed

Saviour as such, Mat. x. 16, 25. and chap. xxiii. 29—36. John xv. 22—25. And, as such, it deserves the wrath of God. Luke xix. 27. *But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me.* Besides, had not the Pharisees been at enmity against the true and real character of God, and of his Son, and inexcusably to blame on that account, those words of Christ to them had been very abusive, Mat. xx. 33. *Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?* But if they were as venomous as serpents, and as spiteful as vipers toward the true God and his Son, the damnation of hell was good enough for them.

Remark I. If the carnal mind is enmity only against mistaken ideas of God, but disposed to love God's true and real character, as soon as known, then nothing more is needful to bring us to love God perfectly, even with all our hearts, than a right speculative idea of him, commonly called doctrinal knowledge, or head knowledge. For if we are naturally disposed to love God's true character, then as soon as we know it, we shall love it, just as Jacob loved Rachel, the first time he saw her. And our love will, on this hypothesis, increase in exact proportion to our doctrinal knowledge. And we shall need the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit, to give us an heart to love God, no more than Jacob did, to give him an heart to love Rachel. An external revelation of God's true character, sufficiently clear and plain, is all that will be needful to beget perfect love to God in our hearts. And then we may be regenerated, and perfectly sanctified by light, without any internal influences of the spirit of God at all. And this is what Pelagians and Socinians really mean.

Rem. 2. If the carnal mind is enmity against God, only as conceiving him to be our enemy, as one who will damn us; then a belief that he is our friend, and will save us, will cause our enmity to cease, and beget love, without any change of nature in us. And then again, we may be regenerated by light. And this is what Antinomians really mean. And were there any evidence *from Scripture, sense, or reason,* of the fact to be believed, *no spirit* would be needed in this case. But because there is *no evidence from Scripture, sense,*

or reason, as the celebrated Mr. Marshall honestly owns, therefore *some spirit* is needed. But not the spirit of God. For it is not the office of the Spirit of God, to enable us to believe *that to be true, which was not true before we believed it.* But God is not our reconciled friend while out of Christ. Nor does pardon ever take place before repentance. When the unregenerate impenitent sinner has it discovered to *him* that God loves him, and is reconciled to him, the thing discovered is a lie; and the father of lies is the author of the discovery. But of this heretofore, in *A blow at the root of the refined Antinomianism of the present age.*

Rem. 3. If the carnal mind is enmity against God's true and real character, as exhibited in the moral law, and as honoured with the highest honours on the cross of Christ, notwithstanding the fullest and plainest declarations of God's readiness to be reconciled to us through Christ, if we repent and return to God through him, then the clearest possible speculative idea of this character will not beget love; the greatest possible degree of doctrinal knowledge will not render God amiable in our eyes. For if the true and real character of God itself is odious to a carnal heart, the idea of that character will excite, not love, but dislike: if the true and real character of Jesus was odious to the heart of a Pharisee, the idea of that character would excite, in the Pharisee's heart, not love, but dislike. So reason teaches; and so the fact was. *They have both seen and hated both me and my Father.* The longer Christ lived, the more he preached, the plainer he spake, the more the Pharisees hated him. For his character was perfectly opposite to theirs. But every impenitent, self-righteous sinner, hath the heart of a Pharisee. Therefore Christ's words to Nicodemus are equally true with respect to all mankind in their natural state. John iii. 3. *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*—For,

Rem. 4. Spiritual life is, according to scripture, communicated by God to the dead soul, to enable it to see and act in a spiritual manner. For, according to scripture, we are *dead in sin;* as perfectly dead, as the body of Christ was when it lay in the grave. And the same power which

raised that from the dead, doth raise us from spiritual death. Eph. i. 19—23. and ii. 1—10. And we know, that a dead corpse must be restored to life, in order of nature, before it can see or hear. So the scripture teaches us, that spiritual life is necessary to enable us to see and act in a spiritual manner. For those who are spiritually dead, are spiritually *blind*. They cannot *discern*, they cannot *know* spiritual things, *spiritually*. 1 Cor. ii. 14. They are *foolishness* to them, and a *stumbling-block*. 1 Cor. i. 18. 23, 24. As the *veil on Moses' face* hid *the glory* of it from the congregation of Israel; (Exod. xxxiv. 29—35.) so the spiritual glory of God and the things of God are hid from the natural man, by a *veil on his heart*. 2 Cor. iii. 13—18. For that enmity to divine things, in which spiritual death consists, implies spiritual blindness. Rom. viii. 7. Eph. iv. 18. For an idea of the glory of God is always attended with love to God. 2 Cor. iii. 18. Enmity against God, therefore, implies that we are blind to his glory; yea, that his true and real character, instead of appearing glorious, and giving pleasure to the mind, appears odious, and excites disagreeable and painful sensations. Rom. i. 28. John xv. 18—25. It is not the design of the Gospel to accommodate the divine character to the taste of the carnal heart. Rom. iii. 31. But on the contrary, the flesh must die; it must be put to death; it must be *crucified*. Gal. v. 17—24. And a new, divine, spiritual life, must be communicated to the soul, to enable it to see and act in a spiritual manner. For, John iii. 3. 5. *Except a man be born again he cannot see*, nor *enter into the kingdom of God*. He must be born again, or he cannot see the glory of Christianity, or cordially embrace it. A man may be a Pharisee, as was Nicodemus; so a man may be a Socinian, a Pelagian, an Arminian, or an Antinomian, without regeneration: but no man can be a Christian, *except he be born again*. Experience and fact confirm the truth. For when Christ was on earth, *he spake as never man spake*; and yet the spiritual glory of Christianity was hid from their eyes. Mat. xi. 20—25. For although *he came*, not to those who had been bred up in pagan darkness, but *to his own* people, who had received their education under Moses and the prophets; yet

his own received him not. Not one *received him,* not one *believed in his name,* but such as *were born of God.* John i. 11, 12, 13. So that it was indeed a universal maxim among the apostolic converts, *that whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ,* (not *will be,* but *gegenetai,*) *hath been born of God.* 1 John v. 1. For this word in this tense, ever hath this signification, in the writings of this apostle, as every man of learning may see, who will look into the original. See 1 John ii. 19. and iii. 9. and iv. 7. and v. 1. 4. 18. and John viii. 41. and ix. 32.—None therefore, but those to whom *good and honest hearts* are thus given, *understand the word and bring forth fruit.* Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. Luke viii. 12—15. But these *all with open face, (the veil* being taken off,) *beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image.* 2 Cor. iii. 13—18. For the truth being spiritually understood, i. e. seen in its glory, is cordially believed. 2 Cor. iv. 3—6. And the truth being seen in its glory and believed, produces every answerable effect in heart and life. John xvii. 17. 1 Cor. iv. 15. 1 Pet. i. 3. 23. Jam. i. 18. Thus this matter is represented in the sacred writings. A more particular explanation of this subject may be seen, *Essay on the Nature and Glory of the Gospel,* Sec. xii. The nature of that *spiritual life* which is communicated in regeneration, and how *it opens the eyes* to see *the beauty of God's moral character,* is explained with great accuracy, by that great philosopher and eminent divine, president Edwards, in his *Dissertation on the Nature of True Virtue,* p. 121, 122, 123, 124, 125.

Question IV. *What contrariety is there between the carnal mind, and God's true and real character?*

Answer. Without entering largely into this question, on which a volume might be written, it will be sufficient for the present purpose, only to say, that the contrariety between the carnal mind and God's true and real character, is the same as is the contrariety between sin and holiness. For the contrariety between God's nature and ours arises merely from this, viz. that God's nature is holy, and our nature is sinful [e].

e But, 1. Sin is as contrary to holiness, as holiness is to sin. And therefore our sinful nature is as contrary to God's holy nature, as God's holy nature is to our sinful nature. And, 2. Our contrariety to God is as universal as is our sinful-

And that this is the truth, is evident from this, that originally God's nature and the nature of man were alike. As it is written, Gen. i. 26. *And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness.* Ver. 27. *So God created man in his own image.* And therefore there was no contrariety between the holy nature of God and the nature of man, originally. When man began to exist, he viewed things as God did, and was affected accordingly. And as God loved his own character exhibited in that law which he gave to Adam; so Adam loved it too. There was then no principle of enmity against God in his heart; no disposition to dislike the strictness of the law, or the severity of the penalty, upon the most mature deliberation. Yea, he was perfectly pleased with both. For as God perfectly loved his own law; so Adam, being like God, created in his image, perfectly loved

ness. If we are totally depraved, our contrariety to God is total. 3. Contrariety to the doctrines and duties of revealed religion, in which God's moral character is exhibited, is contrariety to God's moral character. Every objection against the doctrines, and all backwardness to the duties of religion, are so many expressions of contrariety to God's true and real character. 4. If the true God and the true scheme of religion suited the human heart, mankind would as naturally be united in love to the one true God, and to the one true scheme of religion, as they are in love to the world. Had mankind liked the true God, they never would have set up a false God; and had they liked the true scheme of religion, they never would have invented a false one. 5. Love to a false god, and to a false scheme of religion, is the exercise of a spirit of contrariety to the true God, and to the true religion. 6. Love to God's moral character, properly expressed, was the only thing which exposed the prophets, Jesus Christ, and his apostles, to be hated, reviled, and murdered. 7. Christ on the cross shows that the enmity of the carnal mind against God, is mortal enmity. 8. The Jews expressed and justified their enmity against Christ, both at once, by calling him by reproachful names. John viii. 48. *Say we not well, that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil.* Meantime saying, (Mat. 23, 30.) "If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets." So while they hated and crucified him, who was foretold by all the prophets; they thought themselves doing God good service. 9. They knew they hated Jesus, and had they known him to be true God, their contrariety to the true God would have been ascertained to their consciences. 10. Let God's true and real character be agreed upon, and we shall no longer differ about the character of man. 11. God's true and real character would be agreed upon, if we did not hate to admit the truth. 12. The contrariety of our sinful nature to God's holy nature, is the source of all the heresies in the world.—Men love to have a God and a religion to suit their own hearts.

it too. So that there was originally no contrariety to God in Adam's nature. And therefore there is no contrariety now, in man's nature to God, but only and merely so far as man's nature is become sinful. For as before sin took place in the human heart, there was no contrariety to God in human nature; so now there is no one thing in human nature, that is contrary to God, but sin; nor is there any root of bitterness, but wickedness. But nothing which is now, or which originally was essential to moral agency, is of the nature of sin. For Adam was a moral agent when he had no sin; when he was in the image of God. Besides, if something essential to moral agency were sinful, it would be a sin to be a moral agent. There is therefore in the essential properties of a moral agent, no contrariety to the divine nature. For there is nothing in the universe that is contrary to the holy nature of God, but sin. And whatsoever is contrary to the holy nature of God, is sin. To say that there is something in us which is opposite to the holy nature of God, which is not sin, but a duty; is to say, that opposition to God himself, is not sin, but a duty, And if opposition to the holy nature of God is not sinful, there is no sin. For if it is no sin to be opposite to the holiness of God, there can be no sin. For if opposition to the holy nature of God is lawful, by fair construction, God is legally dethroned, his law is vacated, we are become gods, too big to be under any government. For if it be lawful for us to oppose God, much more to oppose all other beings. So that to say that opposition to the holy nature of God is not sinful, is itself perfect wickedness. Yet, according to Mr. M. that self-love which in us is opposite to the holiness of the divine nature, and absolutely inconsistent with the love of God, is not sinful, but a duty. This is the most shocking sentiment in his book. It is, in effect to say, that it is our duty to be at enmity against God.——Besides,

Adam rebelled against his Creator, while God was his friend; prompted not by despair, but in a belief of satan's lies, *Ye shall be as Gods, ye shall not surely die;* he took and eat, contrary to the express prohibition of his Maker. And we, his posterity, for near six thousand years, have gone on in rebellion, while God has offered to be our friend again. And

his inspired prophets have been abused, and his Son has been crucified in this our world, while sent to invite us to a reconciliation, and to offer us a pardon. Thus stands the fact as recorded in the sacred writings. And thus our contrariety to God began when sin began. Nor is there any thing in our nature contrary to the holy nature of God, but sin. And we began to be sinners while God was our friend. And we have continued in our rebellion through a long succession of ages, while God has been offering pardon all the time.

Therefore,

1. The carnal mind is as really contrary to the holy nature of God, as the holy nature of God is to the carnal mind. For sin is as contrary to holiness, as holiness is to sin. And yet God is willing to forgive us through Christ; but we are not willing to be reconciled to him.

And therefore,

2. The enmity of the carnal mind against God is entirely of a criminal nature, and comprises in it the sum of all wickedness. For as a conformity to God's holy nature is the sum of all holiness; so a contrariety to God's holy nature is the sum of all wickedness. To say that a contrariety to the holy nature of God is not sinful, is in effect, to say that there is no sin on earth, or in hell. And indeed Mr. M. gives a broad hint, (p. 50.) that in hell there is no sin in all their enmity against the Deity. And if his scheme is true, he must be right in this. But to use arguments to justify ourselves in our enmity against God, which will equally justify the devil, is to carry the point as far as the devil himself can desire it should be carried. Nor can any thing better please the devil, than to find himself justified in his enmity against God and his Son, by the professed friends of both.

3. If the enmity of the carnal mind against God is entirely criminal, and the sum of all wickedness, then while we justify ourselves in it, we are disqualified for sealing ordinances by it, if any sin, as such, can disqualify us. For to say that a small sin, persisted in, disqualifies for sealing ordinances, and yet the greatest sin does not; to say, for instance, that stealing one shilling from our neighbour, considered merely as an injury done to him, without repentance, disquali-

fies for sealing ordinances, and that yet a state and course of enmity against God, persisted in, does not, is to *strain at a gnat, and to swallow a camel.*

4. But if it be really true, as Mr. M. says, that 'to love that character of God which is exhibited in the moral law, is the same thing as to love our own misery:' and if 'this is the true reason, and the only reason' we do not love God; then our enmity against God is not in the least degree criminal. And so it doth not in the least degree disqualify us for 'sealing ordinances;' especially, if we are heartily disposed to love that character of God which alone it is our duty to love, so that, without fail, we shall love it as soon as we know it; and that *without any new principle of grace.* Thus the enemies of God are taught, to think themselves blameless in their enmity against God: and thus they are emboldened to approach the table of the Lord. But what communion can there be between him, who loved the character of God exhibited in the moral law, and became incarnate, and lived and died to do it honour, and such an Antinomian law-hating heart! Prov. xxix. 27. 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15.

SECTION VII.

2 Cor. v. 20. *We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

Question. *Doth the Gospel call fallen man to be reconciled to that character of God, which fallen man, as such, is at enmity against; or, only to be reconciled to another character of God, which fallen man, as such, is not at enmity against, but is naturally disposed to love as soon as known?*

OUR author undertakes to prove, (p. 40, 41, 42, 43.) that it is not the duty of fallen man 'to love that character of God which is exhibited in the moral law.' But that, instead of its being a duty, it is a sinful thing to do so; as it is 'inconsistent with the character of God, and the character of man; con-

trary to both law and Gospel; to nature and grace.' Because, 'to love this character, is the same thing as to love our own misery.' And he also undertakes to prove, (p. 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48,) that fallen man, as such, from the mere principles of nature, is disposed to love that character of God which is exhibited in the Gospel, *which is the* ONLY *character the Gospel teaches us to love;* so that we shall love it, as soon as known, *without a new principle of grace.* And therefore the common doctrine of the necessity of a 'new principle of grace' is wrong, and 'regeneration is wrought by light.'

The question relative to this scheme of religion, which we would now propose to examination, is this, viz. 'Doth the Gospel call fallen man to be reconciled to that character of God, which fallen man, as such, is at enmity against; or only to be reconciled to another character of God, which fallen man, as such, is not at enmity against, but is naturally disposed to love as soon as known?'—We will, in the first place, offer some arguments to prove, that the Gospel doth call fallen man to be reconciled to that character of God, which, as such, he is at enmity against, and then consider what Mr. M. has said to the contrary.

Argument 1. The Gospel called Adam, immediately after his fall, to be reconciled to that very character of God against which he was at enmity, or it called him to no reconciliation at all. For to say that the Gospel called him to be reconciled to a character against which he was not at enmity, implies a contradiction. For it supposes a thing to be, and not to be, at the same time. For a call to a reconciliation supposes enmity. Therefore the Gospel did not call Adam after his fall to be reconciled to God at all, or else it called him to be reconciled to that character of God against which he was at enmity. But, to say that the Gospel did not call Adam to be reconciled to God at all, supposes that God was willing to be reconciled to Adam, but did not desire Adam to be reconciled to him. For if the Gospel which was preached to Adam by God himself, did imply no call to Adam to be reconciled to God, then it is plain God did not desire Adam to be reconciled to him; for he did not call him to it; he did not invite him to it: that is, he did not desire that Adam should be recon-

ciled to that character of himself which he had exhibited in his law. But if he did not desire him to be reconciled to that character of himself which he had exhibited in his law, he was willing he should continue to hate it. But if God was willing that Adam should continue to hate that character of himself which he had exhibited in his law, then he did really hate it himself. For if God loved it, he would desire Adam to love it; for he would desire Adam to be like him, and after his image. But to say that God hated that character of himself which he had exhibited in his law, supposes an essential change in God's moral character. For God loved that character before Adam fell, as will be granted.

Remark 1. In this Mr. M.'s scheme is consistent with itself, viz. In supposing no change of nature necessary to be in us in order to our reconciliation to God; because the change of nature necessary to a reconciliation between God and us, has already taken place on God's side. His nature is changed, and so there is no need that ours should be changed. We only need to know the change which has taken place in God's nature, in God's moral character, and all will be well. The breach will be made up, friendship will commence *without any new principle of grace in us.*

Rem. 2. In this also the Scripture scheme is consistent with itself, viz. In supposing a change of nature necessary to take place on our part, in order to our liking the divine character. Because, according to Scripture, no change of nature has, or ever will take place on God's side. For it is a Scripture maxim, that contrary natures are an abomination to each other. Prov. xxix. 27. *An unjust man is abomination to the just; and he that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked.* Therefore contrary natures cannot *like* and *take pleasure* in each other. 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15. *For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial?* But our sinful nature is contrary to God's holy nature. Rom. viii. 7. *The carnal mind is enmity against God.* And therefore regeneration is necessary. John iii. 3. *Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.* And a new nature is communicated in regeneration.

John iii. 6. *That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* The old nature is taken away, and a new nature is given. Ezek. xxxvi. 26. *A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.* And this new nature lays a foundation for delight in God and in his ways. Ver. 27. *I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.* Psalm lxxiii. 25. *Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.*

Rem. 3. There are two kinds of delight in God, which may take place in the human heart, viz. 1. Delight in a mistaken idea of God. 2. Delight in God's true and real character. True delight is delight in God's true and real character. And false delight, is delight in a false and mistaken idea of God. Deists and Socinians believe, that God designs to make all his creatures finally happy: this is their idea of God. And they delight in this idea. The impenitent, law-hating Antinomian, believes, that God designs to make him finally happy: this is his idea of God; and he delights in this idea. The Christian believes, that God has a supreme regard to the Deity, and designs to assert the dignity of the divine nature, and the infinite evil of sin, in the just punishment of every transgression, without exception in the criminal, or in his surety: and so to maintain the honour of his law, which is the image of his heart, a transcript of his moral perfections; and to pardon none but penitent believers; and to grant pardon only as an act of mere pure grace, and only through the atonement of Christ, who hath borne the curse of the law, died the just for the unjust. This is his idea of God. And he delights in this idea. It gives him pleasure to see God exalted, the law honoured, sin punished, the sinner humbled, grace glorified. This is a glorious way of saving sinners. Christ crucified, in this view, is in his eyes *the wisdom of God.* It appears to be wisdom, *truly divine,* to be at such infinite expense, to do honour to that character of God which is exhibited in the law. For that character appears to be truly divine, and so to be worthy of this infinite honour. *It is wise to pay infinite honour to that*

which is infinitely glorious. But it is foolish to render honour to that which is odious, and dishonourable. To a regenerate heart Christ crucified is therefore *the wisdom of God,* but to others *foolishness* and *a stumbling-block.* 1 Cor. i. 18. 23, 24. and ii. 14. These sentiments are explained and proved at large, in my *Essay on the nature and glory of the Gospel.* And this is what Mr. M. misrepresents and cries out against, *as new divinity.* p. 40, 41, 42.

Rem. 4. Every unregenerate sinner, be his doctrinal knowledge what it will, is in the temper of his heart, an infidel. For it is incredible, that infinite honour should be done to that which appears worthy of no honour at all. But the divine law, and the divine character therein exhibited, to a carnal heart, appear worthy of no honour at all. For they appear not amiable, but odious. For, Rom. viii. 7. *The carnal mind is enmity against God.* Therefore, a cordial belief of the truth of the Gospel is peculiar to the regenerate. 1 John v. 1. *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.* Therefore,

Rem. 5. It is not strange, that an unregenerate man, when the true Gospel of Christ is explained and set in a clear light before his eyes, should cry out, 'this is *new divinity* to me.' For it may truly be quite *new* to him. A system of sentiments he never believed to be true. But it is strange that the true Gospel of Christ should appear to be *new divinity* to an old saint. But it is time to proceed:

Arg. 2. God the Father loves that character of himself, which he exhibited to Adam in his law. But the Gospel calls us to be like God; to be conformed to his image: therefore the Gospel calls us to love that character of God which is exhibited in his law. That God the Father loves that character of himself which he exhibited to Adam in his law, is evident from this, viz. That character which is exhibited in the law was God's true character; as Mr. M. grants, p. 41. "The divine character exhibited in the moral law, was that which was exhibited to Adam in his state of innocency, and it was God's true character." Indeed, it was God's true and real character, or else God gave himself a character contrary to truth in the moral law: which none will dare to say. But

if that character of God was God's true and real character, then it will follow, that God loved that character then. For all will grant that God loved his own character. But if God loved that character then, he does love it still, unless his nature is changed. But that God is immutable, *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*, needs no proof to those who believe the bible. But if God still loves that character of himself, which he exhibited in his law, since the fall, as much as he did before, then in order to our being like God and in his image, we must love it too. For if he loves it, and we hate it, then we are not like him, but are contrary to him: are not of the same spirit, but of a spirit and disposition contrary to him. But the Gospel calls us to be like God; and in a true and real conversion we are changed into the *same image*; as all grant. And therefore the Gospel calls us to be reconciled to that character of God which is exhibited in the moral law, which he always did, and always will love, and without the love of which we are not like God, but contrary unto him; are not in his image, but are in the image of the wicked one, who doth now, and always will, hate that character of God which is exhibited in his law.

Arg. 3. God the Son, in character of Mediator, loves that character of God which is exhibited in the law, and against which the carnal mind is at enmity. But the Gospel calls us to be like Christ in the temper of our hearts: therefore the Gospel calls us to be reconciled to, and to love that character of God, which is exhibited in his law, against which all unregenerate sinners are at enmity. That God the Son, in character of Mediator, loves that character of God which is exhibited in the law, is evident, because he is *the express image of his Father's person*. Heb. i. 3. But his Father loves that character, as has been proved; and therefore he loves it as much as his Father does. And besides, he became incarnate, lived and died to do honour to the divine law, and to the divine character therein exhibited. But the Gospel calls us to be like Christ, to be of the same spirit, to imitate him, and follow his example. But if we hate that character of God which is exhibited in the law, we are not like Christ, we are not of the same spirit, we do not imitate him, nor follow

his example; but we are of a temper contrary to him, and like the devil.

Remark 1. To hate that character of God which is exhibited in the law, is to hate Christ Jesus and his righteousness. For Christ Jesus loved that character, and lived and died to do it honour: and in this his righteousness consisted; and for this his Father *was well pleased in him* Therefore,

Rem. 2. Those who are at enmity against God the Father, are also at enmity against God the Son. For to hate the law, is to hate the Gospel. Because the Gospel vindicates the honour of the law. Thus the Pharisees, who hated the true character of God the Father, which was exhibited in the law of Moses, likewise hated the character of Jesus Christ, exhibited in explaining and vindicating that law in his public ministry, and in detecting and condemning the false glosses which they had put upon it. *They have both seen and hated both me and my Father.* For if God's character, exhibited in his law, is odious, then the character of Christ, as Mediator, is odious also. Because Christ's mediatorial character consists in supreme love to that character of God which is exhibited in the law, exercised and expressed in his life, and in his death.

Rem. 3. To expect acceptance with God on the account of the righteousness of Christ, which consists in love to that character of God which is exhibited in the law, while we allow ourselves to hate that character, and really believe that the Gospel does not call us to love it, implies this gross inconsistence, viz. that we acknowledge that love to that character is above all things acceptable to God, and that yet God does not desire us to love it. It was his will that Christ should love and honour it to procure the salvation of his disciples, but his disciples may lawfully hate it. Moreover, to depend on Christ's righteousness, i. e. on Christ's loving that character and doing it honour, while we allow ourselves to hate it, and affirm, that 'it is contrary to the character of God and to the character of man; contrary to the law and to the Gospel; contrary to nature and to grace,' for us to love it; is grossly inconsistent. For it is to depend on that as our justifying righteousness in the sight of God, which, if it were

in us, would be a sin. For *sin is a transgression of the law.* But Mr. M. says, that it is 'contrary to the law of God for us to love that character of God which is exhibited in the moral law.' p. 41, 42. Thus men are taught to trust in the righteousness of Christ for justification in the sight of God, while they allow themselves to hate that righteousness of Christ, and to believe it would be a sinful thing in them to love what he loved, and to be holy as he was holy, and righteous as he was righteous. But, if we think it lawful to hate that character of God which is exhibited in the divine law; then we think ourselves innocent in hating of it. And so our real dependance for acceptance with God in this case, is not on Christ's righteousness, but on our own innocence.

By the law given to Adam it appears, 1. That God was disposed to punish sin. 2. That in his view, it became him as a moral governor of the world, to punish sin. 3. That it was his fixed determination that sin should not go unpunished. And by the cross of Christ, it appears in a still clearer light, 1. That God is disposed to punish sin. 2. That in his view, it becomes him as moral governor of the world, to punish sin. 3. That it is his fixed determination that sin shall not go unpunished.—But a determination, in all instances, to punish sin in the criminal, and never to accept a surety to die in his room, is not, and never was, any part of God's revealed character. However, if God's disposition to punish sin is not an amiable disposition, it never was and never will be an object of love, whether exhibited in the law, or in the cross of Christ. But if it is a beauty in the divine character, it always was, and always will be, an object of love, whether exhibited in the law, or in the cross of Christ. To say, that the holiness and justice of the divine nature are glorious, when the surety is the sufferer; but odious, when the criminal himself is punished, is the grossest absurdity, and the most barefaced hypocrisy.

Arg. 4. The regenerating, sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, are necessary in order to that reconciliation to God, to which the Gospel calls us, as is evident from John iii. 3—6. But the regenerating, sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit are not necessary in order to our loving a charac-

ter, which, while unregenerate, we are not at enmity against. For, 1. There is no need of the regenerating influences of the Spirit, in order to all that *preparatory work*, which is before regeneration; as all grant. 2. After this *preparatory work* is completely finished, according to Mr. M. 'the unregenerate sinner is capable of receiving the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ:' while unregenerate, he means; for he adds 'by which his soul will be regenerated.' p. 51. Thus the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is actually seen, according to Mr. M. by the unregenerate sinner, while unregenerate. And therefore there is, according to him, no need of the regenerating, sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit to bring the sinner thus far. Nay, in fact, the sinner comes thus far while unregenerate. And, 4. being brought thus far, the sinner now needs *no new principle of grace*, as he says, p. 47, 48. For indeed it is natural for all mankind to love that which appears glorious and amiable in their eyes. Nor is any assistance needed in this, according to Mr. M.; no, not so much as external means; 'it will have this effect without the necessity of an exhortation.' p. 52. Just as it was natural for Jacob to love Rachel, as soon as he saw her, 'without the need of an exhortation.' And much less did he need any supernatural assistance of the Spirit of God in the affair. Yea, according to Mr. M. the reconciliation will be perfect on the first discovery, so that an exhortation to be reconciled to God will never more be needed. Thus it is evident, that on Mr. M.'s scheme, the regenerating, sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, are entirely needless in order to a sinner's loving that character of God, against which, Adam was no more at enmity after his fall, than he was before he fell, which Mr. M. supposes is exhibited in the Gospel. And therefore, 5. Regeneration in his sense of it, may 'be wrought by light,' without any sanctifying influences of the Spirit at all. For as God's supposed new character may appear glorious and amiable to one, who is at enmity against God's old character; so this new character may for the same reason be loved by one, who is at enmity against his old character. That is, by the *carnal mind*. For this NEW God teaches his votaries,

that, it is 'contrary to the character of God, and contrary to the character of men; contrary to the law and to the Gospel; contrary to nature and to grace,' to love that character of God which is exhibited in the divine law, *holy, just, and good,* as it is, against which the carnal mind is at enmity. And this doctrine is so perfectly agreeable to a carnal heart, that if we may have the favour and love of the Almighty on this plan, Mr. M. might well say, p. 43. 'That there is nothing in our fallen circumstances to prevent our returning to the love of God,' and that *without any new principle of grace.*

Arg. 5. All the holy inhabitants of heaven love that character of God, which is exhibited in his holy law, as it is set forth in the clearest and strongest point of light, in the eternal misery of the damned. For they all join to cry, *Hallelujah,* while *their smoke ascendeth for ever and ever.* Rev. xix. 1—6. But if we are not by the Gospel brought to a reconciliation to the same character, we cannot join in the worship of heaven, nor with any comfort live among them. 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15. But if Mr. M.'s scheme is true,

Arg. 6. The breach between God and the sinner may be made up, and a perfect reconciliation take place, without the sinner's ever repenting of that enmity against God which is in his heart as a fallen creature. Yea, it is lawful for the sinner to continue in that enmity. Yea, it is his duty. For Mr. M. says, it is 'contrary to the law of God' to love that character of the Deity, which is exhibited in the moral law. p. 40, 41, 42. And therefore, when Christ came to *call sinners to repentance,* he had no intention that they should repent of their enmity against his Father's character exhibited in that holy law, which he loved and obeyed in his life, and honoured in his death; but was free and heartily willing they should go on in their enmity to it to all eternity. For Mr. M. says, (p. 43.) 'The love of God which the Gospel teacheth,' is not love to the divine character exhibited in the law, but 'love of that divine character which is exhibited to us in a Mediator, and NO OTHER.' But if God the Father loves that character of himself which is exhibited in his holy law, and if God the Son loves that character, and if all the holy inhabitants of heaven are like God and his Son, and love that character too,

then converts, on Mr. M.'s scheme, when they arrive to heaven, if they ever should arrive there, could not join with the church above, or make that profession of love to God, which all the rest of the inhabitants do there; but would need an external graceless covenant in that world, in order to join in full communion there, as much as they do in this world here below, in order to join in full communion here.

But it is time now to attend to Mr. M.'s reasoning; and this is the sum, and this is the whole force of his argument, on the strength of which his whole scheme stands, and which he has repeated over and over again.

Objection. "To love that character of God which is exhibited in his law, is the same thing as to love our own misery. But to love our own misery is to take pleasure in pain; which is a contradiction, and in its own nature impossible. Contrary to the character of God, and to the character of men; contrary to the law and to the Gospel; contrary to nature and to grace." p. 10. 12. 41, 42, 43.

Answer, 1. Our author says, (p. 11.) 'That the primary reason why God is to be loved, is the transcendent excellency of the divine perfections'.

But 'the transcendent excellency of the divine perfections' is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. And therefore, that character of God which is exhibited in the law, is as 'transcendantly excellent' since, as it was before the fall. And therefore *this reason of love* remains in FULL FORCE to us in our guilty state.

f 'If all the ground and reason there is for fallen man to exercise dependence on God,' i. e. for eternal life, 'ariseth from the covenant of grace, as Mr. M. says, (p. 12.) yet all the ground and reason that mankind have to love God does not arise from the covenant of grace.' For God was in himself infinitely worthy of our love, antecedent to a consideration of the gift of Christ, otherwise the gift of Christ to answer the demands of the law, in our room, had been needless; for there was no need our surety should ever pay a debt for us which we ourselves never owed. And it was as 'repugnant to the law, and as much 'presumption,' to expect eternal life before the fall, as since, without perfect obedience, on the foot of law. This kind of dependence was never required by the law of Adam, or of any other man. It was no more his duty before the fall than it was afterwards.

Ans. 2. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, and all the holy inhabitants of heaven, love that character of God which is exhibited in his law; and yet they do not love misery itself, or take any pleasure in the pains of the damned, considered merely as pain. If God did take pleasure in the pains of the damned, considered merely as pain; if this were the character which he exhibits of himself in his law; then to love this character would be the same thing as to love misery. So that this is implicitly, and by fair construction, imputed to the Father of the universe, when it is said, that 'to love that character of God which is exhibited in the divine law, is the same thing as to love our own misery.' But to say, that God and the holy inhabitants of heaven take pleasure in the pains of the damned, considered merely as pain, is to impute to them a spirit of *disinterested malice*.

But to justify our enmity against God by such an imputation, is exceeding impious. But on the other hand, if God may love that character of himself which is exhibited in his law, and yet not love misery itself; then, were we *regenerate*, were we made *partakers of the divine nature*, we might be like God; and be affected as the holy inhabitants of heaven are; and so might love that character of God which is exhibited in the divine law, and not love misery in ourselves, or in any other beings.

A wise and good father, when he inflicts just punishment on a haughty, stubborn child, for some heinous crime, approves and loves his own conduct, and the character which he exhibits therein; but yet he does not love his child's misery, itself, or take pleasure in his pain, as such, or desire his child to take pleasure in it. And if the proud, haughty, stubborn, impenitent child should say, 'To love a whipping father is the same thing as to love to be whipped; but to love to be whipped is to love misery; but to love misery is a contradiction, and in its own nature impossible, and contrary to the law of God, which requires me to love myself;' every obedient child in the family would be able to see the fallacy of the argument. And love to their father's honour, would make them love him for vindicating his honour in the just punishment of such a son. Nor is there a father on

earth, hearing such language as this from a child, but that would think it proper and fit that his uncircumcised heart should be so humbled as to accept the punishment of his iniquity before he pardoned him. Nor would he forgive him, until he should feel and say, 'I deserve to be whipped. It is good enough for me. It becomes my father to do it. Nor is it a blemish, but a beauty in his character, to be disposed to chastise such a haughty wretch as I am.' For the father approves of his own disposition to punish his child. He knows that it becomes him. And until his child knows it too, he cannot but disapprove of him, as a stubborn, impenitent child. And yet no father ever desired his child to love misery. Nay, on the contrary, did the child love to be whipped, did whipping give the child pleasure, it would cease to be of the nature of a punishment. It would gratify the child, and frustrate the father. To say in this case, that 'to love a whipping father is the same thing as to love to be whipped,' is to say, that the father whips the child merely for the pleasure of whipping it, and takes delight in its misery, for itself: and so is guilty of *disinterested malice,* which no man ever was guilty of, and which to charge on the Deity is the highest blasphemy. For if the father loves his own character, and delights in his own conduct toward his child, without loving the child's misery itself; then nothing hinders, but that the child might love his father's character and conduct too, without loving its own misery. For a more particular answer to this objection, see *Essay on the nature and glory of the Gospel.*

SECTION VIII.

Gen. i. 27. *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him.*

Question. *How was it possible for Adam before the fall, to love that character of God which was exhibited to him in the law, consistently with the love of his own happiness?*

THE difficulty which attends this question may come into view, if we consider,

1. That a state of eternal misery is infinitely worse than not to be. Existence itself is desirable to mere nature, only as it implies a capacity for the enjoyment of happiness. Nature dreads annihilation, as thereby all happiness is lost for ever. But it is better to be without happiness, than it is to be not only without happiness, but miserable. Pure misery is worse than non-existence. Hence abandoned guilty sinners often wish for annihilation. And had Adam for the first transgression been threatened with annihilation, it might have been thought of with less horror and dread. But misery is a dreadful thing. And eternal misery is infinitely dreadful, infinitely worse than not to be. How therefore could Adam think of that dreadful word DEATH, as implying eternal misery, and yet love that Being who had threatened this for the first transgression? Yea, and *love that very character exhibited in the threatening itself?* How could *love to this character consist with his love to his own happiness?*—It is true, God had been kind to him, in giving him a happy existence, surrounded with many delights: but this happiness and these delights to be enjoyed for thousands of ages, were lighter than a feather, compared with eternal misery.—And it is true, he might remain happy for ever, in case of perfect obedience. And this was a glorious prospect.—But what if he sinned? What then? DEATH! ETERNAL DEATH! never ending woes were threatened, as his just desert. But why eternal death for one offence? Where was the wisdom,

justice, or goodness of this? This is the language of self-love, as it now takes place in fallen man. And if, as Mr. M. says, 'this principle of self-love was essential to moral agency' in innocent Adam, it must have been the language of his heart before the fall.——But,

2. One bad property entirely approved of, and constantly exercised, will render any moral character devoid of beauty. If there is no moral beauty in the divine character, he is neither worthy of supreme love, nor capable of being the supreme good. A law, a fixed law, is an expression of the fixed character of the law-giver. If God's disposition to punish sin with eternal misery appeared in Adam's eyes to be a bad property in the Deity, it was not possible he should love him with all his heart. It was as impossible before his fall as after, even as it is as impossible to love a tyrant before we fall into his hands, as afterwards. And if Adam could not love the divine character before his fall, then he could take no delight in him. For an odious character, instead of giving pleasure, gives pain. And if Adam neither loved the divine character, nor delighted in it before the fall, he was in the same state and temper of mind before as he was after the fall. And if so, then he was not created in the image of God, but came into existence as much depraved as we are.

3. To say that this dark side of the divine character was out of his view before he fell, and that he viewed the Deity only in the character of an almighty benefactor, and his friend; and therefore in this view of things, 'the love of God, and self-love were consistent:' is really to say, that Adam before the fall did not love God's true and real character, as exhibited in the law which he was under. But rather that character was so entirely out of his view, that he had no exercises of heart about it, good or bad; for it, or against it: which amounts to the same thing as to say, that he was never actually friendly to God's true character, even before the fall. But rather had he fully known it, and taken a deliberate view of it with application to himself, he would have disliked it, even then. And this must with as much reason then, as afterwards, have been the language of his heart; 'to love this character of God is to love my own misery; but to love my

own misery is impossible. For to take pleasure in pain implies a contradiction.'

4. Mr. M. says, p. 42. 'For a principle of self-love is essential to our nature. Take away all self-love, and a total indifference to pleasure and pain will take place in us; and then we become incapable of being influenced by promises and threatenings, rewards and punishments; which strips us of our moral agency. But to love God in our guilty state according to the character of him in the moral law, does thus totally exclude all self-love from its proper place and exercise in the heart. For to be well pleased in God as a holy and righteous Being, from the perfections of whose nature it becomes *absolutely necessary* that he should make us for ever completely miserable [g], is directly repugnant to, and ab-

g Q. 1. Was it *absolutely necessary from the perfections of the divine nature*, that fallen Adam should be miserable for ever? i. e. that his sin should be punished in his own person? Or, Q. 2. Did God, *by the law given to Adam*, lay himself under an absolute necessity to make Adam miserable for ever? i. e. to punish his sin in his own person. If so, then the doctrine of substitution, of one the dying in the room of another, is absolutely inconsistent with the perfections of divine nature, and with the tenour of the divine law. Which to say, saps the very foundation of divine revelation; and demonstrates that the God, who appeared to Adam after the fall, was not the same God that had appeared to him before. The God of the law and the God of the Gospel, are two beings, absolutely inconsistent with each other. The truth is, 1. That God's disposition to punish sin according to its desert is, and ever was, and ever will be, essential to his nature. But to punish sin, in all instances in the criminal himself, without ever admitting a surety, is not essential to his nature. But, 2. God's disposition to punish sin according to its desert, is set in as clear and strong a point of light in the Gospel, as in the law; in the death of Christ, as if every sinner had been punished in his own person. 3. This disposition is a beauty in the divine character, or a blemish. If it is a beauty, then it is, and always was, and always will be, an object of love. If a blemish, then it is not an object of love, as exhibited in the law, or in the Gospel; in the death of the criminal, or of his surety. But if it is a blemish, it is more odious, as exhibited in the Gospel, than in the law. 4. As a regard to a parent's honour renders the parent's disposition to maintain his honour, in the government of his house, a beauty in the eyes of a child; so a regard to the honour of the Deity renders his disposition, to maintain his honour, in the government of his kingdom, a beauty in the eyes of every regenerate soul But the holiness and justice of the divine nature are disagreeable in the eyes of every one, who is under the government of supreme self-love. For mere self-love has no regard for God. However, 5. A carnal heart, which is enmity against God's true and real character, from a mere selfish spirit, may be greatly pleased with the idea of *an almighty reconciled father and friend, determined to*

solutely inconsistent with, the least degree of regard to our own well being. There can 'be in nature no such sort of regeneration as to bring the heart, under such circumstances, to exercise true love to God.'——Therefore, if these things are true,

5. It was in the nature of things impossible that Adam, before the fall, should deliberately and understandingly love that character of God which was exhibited to him in the law he was under. For it implied 'love to his own misery,' to love it one time as really as another, before his fall as well as afterwards. Thus when a wise and good father threatens to whip his child in case he commits some particular crime, which he warns him against; to love the character of that father exhibited in that threatening, is as really contrary to self-love before the crime is committed, as it is afterwards. For it is precisely the same thing to love a character exhibited in a threatening, as it is to love the same character exhibited in the execution of that threatening. For the character exhibited is precisely the same. But to love the same character is the same thing. And if it implies a 'total indifference to pleasure and pain,' to love this character at one time, it does also equally at all times. For love to it is always, at all times, and under all circumstances, precisely one and the same thing. So that, if Mr. M.'s reasoning is just, Adam came into existence with a spirit of enmity to God in his heart. Nor was it possible in the nature of things, that he should ever have had it in his heart, to love that character of God which was exhibited in the law which he was under. Nor is it possible, that we his posterity should ever be brought to love it. 'There can be in nature no such sort of regeneration.' Therefore Adam was not created in the image of God, nor are any of his posterity recovered to the image of God by the regenerating, sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. And

make him happy for ever, and may cry out, *this God is trancendently excellent and glorious*; but God does not sustain this character, with respect to any impenitent sinner. It is true, many impenitent sinners have such 'a discovery,' but the thing discovered is a lie, and the father of lies is the author of the discovery. And yet they mistake this lie, for *glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

thus divine revelation is sapped at the very foundation. For one of the first facts revealed, is in its own nature absolutely impossible, viz. That Adam was created in the image of God. Because, for Adam to love that character of God which was exhibited in that law which Adam was under, was 'inconsistent with the least degree of regard to his own well-being.'—Besides,

6. If it is inconsistent with that regard to our own well-being, which we ought to exercise, in our guilty state, to love that character of God; it is equally inconsistent with that regard to our neighbour's well-being, which we ought to exercise. For it is an agreed point, that we ought *to love our neighbour as ourselves.* And it is as 'contrary to the law of God' to delight in our neighbour's misery, as in our own. So that,

7. Unless a universal salvation of devils and damned takes place, it will eternally be 'absolutely inconsistent' with that regard which we ought to have to ourselves and to our neighbours, to love the Deity. And therefore, if Mr. M.'s reasoning is just, all holy beings in the intellectual system must join in a general revolt, unless the Deity entirely lays aside his moral character, exhibited in the moral law; and grants a general release to all the damned. And thus,

8. The doctrine of the eternity of hell torments must be given up, or God's moral character is wholly ruined. For it is as bad a piece of conduct in the Deity to damn my neighbour, as it is to damn myself. For my neighbour's welfare is worth as much as my own. And it is as 'contrary to the law' to love my neighbour's misery, as to love my own misery. It never was, therefore, if Mr. M.'s reasoning is just, any part of God's moral character, to be disposed to punish sin with *everlasting punishment*, as Jesus taught, Mat. xxv. 46. And so Jesus was not the Christ. Or else the Socinians are right, and we must join with them, and say, that God never did think, 1. That he was God, i. e. an infinitely glorious and amiable being, infinitely worthy of the supreme love and universal obedience of his rational creatures. Or, 2. That sin was an infinite evil. Or, 3. That sin did deserve an infinite punishment. Nor, 4. Did he ever intend to punish i

with *everlasting punishment.* And, 5. If sin is not an infinite evil, an infinite atonement never was needed, or made. And so, 6. Our Saviour is not God. And thus a denial of *the divinity of God the Father,* issues in the denial of *the divinity of God the Son.* And having framed in our fancy a God to suit our hearts, the *Holy Ghost,* as a sanctifier, becomes needless. For we can love this God, *without any new principle of grace.* And thus, if Mr. M.'s reasoning is just, and if we will pursue it, in its necessary consequences, we are Socinians, or infidels: and the odds between Socinianism and infidelity is not great.

Thus the difficulty is stated. And the answer to it is as follows:

This must be admitted, as a self-evident maxim, that that regard to the welfare of ourselves and of our neighbours, which is inconsistent with the love of God's moral character, is of the nature of opposition to God. But opposition to the moral character of God is not a duty, but a sin. That self-love, therefore, 'which is absolutely inconsistent with the love of God,' is criminal. And therefore it was so far from being 'essential to moral agency' in innocent Adam, that it did not belong to, but was inconsistent with his character. He loved happiness, but he placed his chief happiness in God's glory: *of whom, and by whom, and to whom, are all things; to whom be glory for ever.* Nor had he any separate interest of his own, independent of God, and in opposition to his honour and glory, nor the least degree of a selfish spirit. For himself, his soul and body, his all, was offered up as a living sacrifice to God, without reserve. And it was no more inconsistent with Adam's love of happiness to love God for saying, *In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;* than it was inconsistent with God's goodness, for God to love his own character exhibited in this threatening. It is in its own nature, and by the consent of all mankind, perfectly consistent, to give up and sacrifice a lesser good to a greater, if the greater can be secured in no other way: while yet at the same time, the lesser good, which is given up, is valued according to its worth. If God acted a consistent part in exercising a greater regard to his own honour than to Adam's welfare, in giving

out that threatening, *In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*, then it was equally consistent in Adam to be affected as his Maker was. If the Deity was consistent with himself, then Adam, who was created in his image, was consistent also. If the holiness and justice of the divine nature, exhibited in that threatening, were perfect in beauty, without a blemish in the eyes of infinite goodness, they must likewise appear so in Adam's eyes, while he had no other kind of regard for his own welfare, than had his Creator. That is, so long as he continued to be in the image of God. And if love to God and to his own happiness were originally consistent in Adam, when in the image of God, they may be equally consistent in any of Adam's sons, who are anew restored to that image of God which Adam lost. And the holiness and justice of the divine nature, as exhibited in the divine law, may appear to be perfect in beauty, with application to ourselves; and God appear to be infinitely lovely, in his disposition to punish sin according to its deserts; and yet our own eternal welfare be at the same time prized according to its worth, and the salvation of the Gospel appear infinitely precious, and the fruit of grace infinitely great and absolutely free; and the Gospel way of salvation worthy of God. But were not the divine character exhibited in the divine law perfect in beauty, without a blemish, it ought to have been laid aside in disgrace, and not honoured with the highest honours on the cross. If 'to love God is the same thing as to love misery,' if to love God is 'contrary to the law of God,' then that law which requires this, is an absurd, inconsistent, tyrannical law, not worthy of God, nor worthy to be honoured by the blood of his own Son. For a more large and particular view of this subject the reader is referred to my *Essay on the Gospel*. sect. vi.

Mr. M.'s reasoning implies, that in Adam before the fall, there was really 'no principle of holiness,' no disinterested regard to the Deity: and that his whole soul was under the government of self-love, even the same 'principle of self-love' which governed him after the fall. And therefore, as soon as God's favour was lost, and he exposed to destruction, this favourite principle of self-love became 'inconsistent with

the love of God,' and continues to be so, until God appears to be our friend again. And so Adam had no 'principle of holiness' to lose, nor is there any such thing for us to expect.

Mr. M. says, p. 48. 'But when we inquire of them what they mean by this *new principle* which is implanted in the soul by regeneration, they can give no account about it.' Yes, we can give as distinct an account about it, as we can of a 'principle of self-love.' It is that *image of God in which Adam was created, restored anew.* It is true, that in Adam this *holy principle* was not a confirmed habit, but liable to be lost by the first sin; but in believers who are united to the second Adam, the 'principle of grace' is a confirmed habit, and shall never be lost. It becomes confirmed in consequence of the first act of saving faith. Eph. i. 13, 14[h]. But

h As Adam was created in the image of God to prepare him for holy acts and exercises of heart; so the same image of God is restored in regeneration to prepare us for the first holy act. As there was a holy principle in Adam before the first holy act; so there is a holy principle in the regenerate sinner before the first holy act. And, as Adam's holy principle was not a confirmed habit in its first existence, but was to have been confirmed on his acting up to the covenant he was under; so the holy principle given in regeneration is not a confirmed habit in its first existence, but immediately becomes confirmed as soon as the regenerate sinner complies with the covenant of grace in the first act of saving faith. And thus, as Adam would have been entitled to eternal life on his compliance with the covenant of works; so the regenerate sinner is entitled to eternal life on his compliance with the covenant of grace. For a confirmed habit of grace is eternal life, i. e. life never to end; life everlasting. John v. 24. *He that believeth hath everlasting life.* Hence the promises of the Gospel are not made to the holy principle, passively considered, but to its acts and exercises; even as the blessings of the first covenant were not promised to that image of God, in which Adam began to exist, but to his active compliance with that covenant. And thus, that faith, by which we are married to Christ, is not an unregenerate, sinful act; but as our catechism expresses it, 'a saving grace.' But if faith is before regeneration, the act of a sinner, dead in sin, 'totally depraved,' it is not 'a saving GRACE;' but a saving SIN. Or else it is not an act, but a mere passive thing, and implies no consent of will.

'*Question.* But here it may be doubted, and objected against this position, If we cannot believe till we are quickened with spiritual life, as you say, and cannot be justified till we believe, as all say, then it will follow, that a regenerate soul may be in a state of condemnation for a time, and consequently perish, if death should befall him in that juncture.' Thus Mr. Flavel states the objection, and thus he answers it.

'*Solution.* To this I return; that when we speak of the priority of this quickening work of the spirit to our actual believing, we rather understand it of

its nature is the same. For there is but one kind of true holiness in the universe. For the holiness of Christ is of the same nature with the holiness of God the Father. Christ is the express image of his Father; and of his fulness we receive, and grace for grace. In regeneration, therefore, we are restored anew to that image of God, in which Adam was created. So that this 'principle of grace' is that whereby we are inclined to a disinterested supreme regard to the Deity, an infinitely worthy Being; and so disposed to love that character of him exhibited in his law in which his infinite dignity is asserted, in the threatening of an infinite punishment for sin. Even as self-love is 'that principle' whereby a fallen creature is inclined to a supreme regard to himself, and to his own honour and interest, separate from, independent of, and unsubordinate to, God and his glory. Which self-love is in kind, different from that love of happiness which is essential to every holy being. The one is contrary to the holiness of the divine nature, and the source of all our enmity against the Deity. The other is in perfect harmony with the divine nature, and consistent with the perfect love of the holiness and justice of God, as exhibited in his law.

Mr. M. says, (p. 48.) 'But if this be true, that there must be a gracious principle implanted in the heart of a sinner, before he is capable of any gracious acts; then for the same reason, there must be a corrupt principle implanted in the heart of a holy creature, (Adam, for instance,) before he is capable of any sinful acts.' The Scripture teaches us, that *God created man in his own image*, whereby he was prepared to holy acts and exercises: but the Scripture does not teach us, that God afterwards *created man in the image of the devil,*

the priority of nature, than of time, the nature and order of the work requiring it to be so; a vital principle must, in order of nature, be infused, before a vital act can be exerted. First make the tree good, and then the fruit good: And admit we should grant some priority in time also to this quickening principle, before actual faith; yet the absurdity mentioned would be no way consequent upon this concession; for as the vital act of faith quickly follows the regenerating principle, so the soul is abundantly secured against the danger objected; God never beginning any special work of grace upon the soul, and then leaving it, and the soul with it, in hazard; but preserves both to the finishing and completing of his gracious design.' Mr. Flavel's *method of grace, Sermon* 5.

to render him capable of sinful acts. And therefore, 'if we would acquiesce in the plain Scripture account of these things, we should readily allow,' that it was needful, in order to prepare Adam for holy acts, that he should be *created in the image of God*; yet it was not necessary 'for the same reason, that there should be a corrupt principle implanted in his heart, before he was capable of any sinful act.' For sin begins in that which is merely negative; i. e. it begins in *not loving* God with all the heart; in ceasing to exercise that regard to the Deity which is his due. Or in not having such a sense of his worthiness of love and regard, as ought to take place in the heart. But a sense of God's infinite worthiness, of supreme love and perfect obedience, may cease to fill and govern the whole soul, without a previous implantation of a corrupt principle. It did so in Adam. For had he remained under the entire government of supreme love to God, he would not have eaten the forbidden fruit; and as supreme love to God ceased, supreme self-love took place of course: but it never was in Adam's heart before. He now, for the first time, began to have a frame of heart answerable to satan's words, *Ye shall be as Gods; ye shall not surely die.* And so he took and eat. In consequence of which, this principle of supreme self-love became a confirmed habit, and his whole heart was disposed to justify himself in it. And thus Adam became totally depraved.

Remark 1. Holiness, as it originally took place in human nature, had God for its author: and it was produced by a *creating* power; *in the image of God,* CREATED *he him.* So it is restored by the same power. Eph. ii. 10. *We are his workmanship,* CREATED *in Christ Jesus unto good works.* But that which is God's gift, (Ezek. xxxvi. 26.) *A new heart will I give you;* is also the sinner's duty. Ezek. xviii. 31. *Make you a new heart.* For total depravity and moral agency are consistent: otherwise those words, (Eph. ii. 1.) *Dead in sin,* would be an express contradiction. To say that the doctrine of *created holiness* is absurd, is to say that the bible is not the word of God: for this is one of the first doctrines taught in that book. *In the image of God created he him.*

Rem. 2. As Adam, while in the image of God, viewed the divine character exhibited in the moral law, in the same glorious point of light in which God himself did, in which view the image of God in Adam partly consisted, and which view he totally lost by the fall; so this view of the divine character is restored, when the image of God is renewed in regeneration. As it is written, (Col. iii. 10.) *The new man is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him*: i. e. that view of divine things, which is like that view which God hath of them, and which is *the image of his knowledge*, and which was originally in man before the fall, and was lost by the fall, is *renewed*, is caused to exist anew, by the same power by which it at first existed, when *God created man in his own image*. 2 Cor. iv. 6. *For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness*, (saying, Gen. i. 3. *Let there be light, and there was light,)* by the same creating power, *hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

Rem. 3. Habitually to view things as God does, and to be affected, and act accordingly, (i. e. comprising both habit and act,) is the whole of that image of God, to which saints are recovered by the power of the Holy Ghost, imperfectly in this world, and perfectly in the world to come. And this image of God is the same in kind, with that which Adam lost. For the essential rectitude of the divine nature is the original standard. The moral law is a transcript of this original. This law was written on Adam's heart. The mediatorial righteousness of Christ is the law perfectly fulfilled. So Christ is the express image of his Father. And saints are the express image of Christ. And so there is but one kind of true holiness in the universe. And this is that which will lay the foundation for the perfect and eternal union, which will take place among all holy Beings, in the kingdom of heaven—God on the throne, and every creature there in his proper place, by universal consent, all of the same spirit.

Rem. 4. The false kinds of holiness, exhibited in all false schemes of religion, differ in kind from the holiness of heaven, which implies love to that character of God which is exhibited in the moral law, to which all unholy beings are

in a state of total opposition. For graceless men, who are pacified merely in a belief that they are safe, are in any other view, of the same temper toward the Deity, with the damned. For supreme self-love governs every apostate creature, who is totally destitute of true love, of disinterested benevolence to the most high God, the Creator and Lord of heaven and earth.

SECTION IX.

Mat. xxviii. 19. *Baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

THE CHRISTIAN CREED; THE ARMINIAN CREED; MR. M.'S CREED. REMARKS ON EACH.

THAT which is commonly called *The Apostles' creed*, although not compiled by the apostles, yet is confessedly of very ancient date. And the three principal articles of it are these: 1. *I believe in God the Father, almighty maker of heaven and earth.* 2. *I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son.* 3. *I believe in the Holy Ghost.* Which doubtless had reference to the *form of baptism* appointed by our blessed Saviour. He therefore, who believes aright, and in a right manner, concerning Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, has the true Christian faith, and is himself a true Christian; and so is qualified to be active in offering up himself and his seed to God in Christian baptism. But some of the chief things, which in the inspired writings we are taught to believe concerning the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are these, which may be expressed in the following articles, in contrast with the Arminian creed, and with Mr. M.'s.

The Christian Creed.	*The Arminian Creed.*	*Mr. Mather's Creed.*
1. *Concerning God the Father.* I BELIEVE that the moral character of God exhibited in the moral law, is perfect in beauty, without a blemish. And	1. *Concerning God the Father.* I BELIEVE that it would have been unjust in God to have held mankind after the fall bound by the moral law, with-	1. *Concerning God the Father.* I BELIEVE that the moral character of God, exhibited in the moral law, is not to us an object of love; and that it is

The Christian Creed.	*The Arminian Creed.*	*Mr. Mather's Creed.*
that our disaffection to the Deity is absolutely inexcusable and infinitely criminal; and justly deserves the penalty threatened, infinitely dreadful as it is. In which view, the divine law is holy, just, and good; worthy of the highest honour; and the salvation of the Gospel from step to step, from beginning to end, is of mere grace.	out any abatement. And that therefore, some relief was in justice due to a fallen world. And therefore, the relief granted is not wholly of grace; nor ought it be acknowledged as such by us.	not a duty, but a sin, for us to love it: even contrary to the law of God. Because, to love it is the same thing as to love our own misery. However, God has given his Son to fulfil this law, and to vindicate and maintain the honour and dignity of his character exhibited in it; that sinners might be pardoned while at enmity against it. p. 28. 41, 42, 43.
2. *Concerning God the Son.*	2. *Concerning God the Son.*	2. *Concerning God the Son.*
I BELIEVE that Jesus Christ, in character of Mediator between God and man, loved the moral character of his Father, exhibited in the moral law, and lived and died to do it honour; that through him penitent believers might be saved, consistently with the divine justice, and to the glory of divine grace. And in this view Christ crucified is the wisdom of God, and the power of God.	I BELIEVE that Christ died to purchase an abatement of this unjust law; and to procure salvation for us on terms which we are able to comply with, by his assistance.	I BELIEVE that the character of God exhibited in the Gospel, is so accommodated to the state and temper of our hearts, that we shall love it as soon as known, without any new principle of grace; and even while we are at enmity against that character of God exhibited in the law. p. 22. 41—43.
3. *Concerning God the Holy Ghost.*	3. *Concerning God the Holy Ghost.*	3. *Concerning God the Holy Ghost.*
I BELIEVE that fallen man is so disaffected to the character of the Father and the Son, that no means whatsoever are sufficient to reconcile us to God, without the regenerating influences of the Holy Ghost. So that except we are born again, we cannot see the kingdom of God. But in consequence of the regenerating influences of the Holy Ghost, by which the veil is taken off from our hearts, we behold the glory of the Lord, and every answerable affection is excited in us. And God	I BELIEVE that all men have sufficient assistance to comply with the terms of salvation, as it would be unjust to require more than we can do, without granting needful assistance to enable us to do it. And thus the injury done to us by the law is made up by the Gospel. And in this view the divine character appears amiable in our eyes. And all mankind might love it, did they but know it, without any new principle of grace. See Dr. Stebbins, on the Operations	I BELIEVE that all needful assistance of the holy Spirit is promised to all baptised persons, to render external means effectual to salvation. But *light* is all that is needful. For no kind of regeneration will bring the human heart to love that character of God which is exhibited in the law: and the character of God exhibited in the Gospel, will naturally be loved, as soon as known, by every one, without any new principle of grace. But not loved very much; for I believe,

The Christian Creed.	*The Arminian Creed.*	*Mr. Mather's Creed.*
and Christ are loved more than wives and children, than houses and lands; yea, than our own lives. Whereby we are disposed and prepared to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Christ: and publicly join with his people, and espouse his cause.	of the Spirit. Dr. Whitby on the five points.	that not more than one convert in a hundred can say, with a good conscience, that he loves God at all. And so saints as well as sinners stand in need of the external covenant. First book, p. 39. 60. Second book, p. 45—48. 78, 79, 80, 81.

Remark 1. According to the Arminian creed, mankind are the injured party, Christ died to get justice done us; and simply to have justice done us is all we need to bring us to be at peace with God. Let the terms of salvation be as low as in justice they ought to be; let us have all that assistance which in justice we ought to have; and we need no more: the rest we will do ourselves. But for God to do us justice, is not an act of grace.

2. According to Mr. Mather's creed, the divine law, antecedent to a consideration of the gift of Christ, requires us, on pain of eternal death, to do that which is not our duty to do: yea, that which to do, in us, would be a sinful thing, viz. to love God with all our heart. And so Christ fulfilled a law, in our stead, which it was not our duty to fulfil: yea, a law to obey which, in us, had been a sinful thing. But to pay a debt for us, which we ourselves did not owe, was needless: and to honour a law which requires sin, is a sinful thing.

3. The divinity of God the Father is the first article of the *Christian creed*, and so much the foundation of the whole Christian system, that if this is denied, the whole will sink of course. Or in other words, that God, the Creator and moral governor of the universe, is an absolutely perfect, and infinitely glorious and amiable Being, infinitely worthy of supreme love and universal obedience from his creature man, is the foundation on which the law stands, and on which the whole Gospel scheme is built. To deny this point, is in effect to deny the whole of divine revelation. Atheism is at the bottom of infidelity. The contrariety of the carnal mind to

God's true and real character, is at bottom of Atheism. *The fool saith in his heart, there is no God.*

4. It was wise in God, even at the expense of the blood of his own Son, to assert and maintain the honour of a law, which is a transcript of his moral character, and which all his apostate creatures join to hate; because in this he does justice to himself, and to his government, while he shows mercy to sinners. But enmity against the divine law renders us blind to the wisdom, glory, and grace of the Gospel, and is the cause of unbelief. 1 Cor. i. 18. and ii. 14. Compared with Rom. viii. 7. and iii. 25. and vii. 12. John viii. 42, 43.

5. He who understands and believes the Christian creed, and who is affected and acts accordingly, is a Christian qualified for baptism, and entitled to eternal life. Mat. xiii. 23. Mark xvi. 16. John xvii. 3.

6. He who believes the first article of the Christian creed, with a living faith, has what Paul means by *repentance toward God.* And he who believes the second article of the Christian creed, with a living faith, has what Paul means by *faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.* A belief of both which is implied in that faith by which a sinner is justified. Luke iii. 3. and v. 31, 32. and xviii. 14. and xxiv. 47. Acts xx. 21. Rom. iii. 19—26. And this faith is the first grace, and the sum, seed, and root of all Christian graces. Mat. xiii. 23. And is peculiar to the regenerate. Rom. viii. 7. 1 John v. 1. 1 Cor. i. 18. and ii. 14. John i. 13. Luke viii. 11—15. And is eternal life begun in the soul. John xvii. 3.

7. The love of the truth is the life of faith; or in other words, love to the truth believed is of the essence of a living faith, and that wherein it specifically differs from the faith of devils, or a dead faith. John xvi. 27. 2 Thes. ii. 10, 11, 12. Jam. ii. 26. And therefore,

8. There is a universal inseparable connexion between a living faith, and a holy life, (which renders assurance attainable by believers in common. Mat. xiii. 23. Jam. ii. 17, 18. 1 John ii. 3.) So that those words are strictly true, 1 John ii. 4. *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a* LIAR, *and the truth is not in him.* But,

9. The *faith of devils*, attended with a *lying profession*, is not that qualification for baptism which our Saviour had in view, in Mark xvi. 16. *He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved.*

10. The Gospel may be, and ought to be, preached to all in common, even to every *creature*, let their character be ever so vicious, as a means of their conversion: but baptism is not to be administered to adults until they believe, and profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him. Mark xvi. 15, 16. Acts viii. 37. Rom. x. 9, 10.—For,

11. The adult person, in the act of offering himself to God in baptism, practically declares, that he devotes himself to God through Jesus Christ, and so *puts on Christ*. Gal. iii. 26, 27. But a false and lying profession is condemned by God in the Old Testament. Psalm lxxviii. 36, 37. Eccl. v. 5. and by Jesus Christ in the new. Luke vi. 46. Mat. xxii. 12. Luke xiv. 25—35. 1 John ii. 4. Rev. ii. 2. 9. And is a means, not of salvation, but of destruction, Acts v. 1—11.

12. The adult person, who is unqualified to offer himself in baptism, is equally unqualified to offer his infant child in baptism. For he who is without a heart to devote himself to God, is equally without a heart to devote his child to God.

13. Pride, in ambitious minds, may excite very strong inclinations to make a false profession; but a well enlightened conscience never will dictate this, as matter of duty.

14. It is the indispensable duty of every one, to whom the Gospel comes, to become a real Christian without delay: and then without delay to make a public profession of Christianity: and then to attend the seals. But to seal the covenant of grace with our hands, while we reject it in our hearts, is to act deceitfully with our Maker. And to invent a new covenant which God never exhibited, and a new scheme of religion to support it, which God never revealed, suited to the hearts of those who reject the covenant of grace, and who are under the curse of the covenant of works, is to find a resting place for the wicked.

SECTION X.

Mr. Mather's scheme of religion inconsistent with itself.

OUR author professes in his *preface*, not 'to be fond of his own judgment;' but to stand 'ready to give it up,' when any one will do 'the friendly office of setting *light* before him.' And he desires that if there be any 'material mistakes' in his scheme, they may be 'pointed out.' It is therefore to be hoped, that he will not be displeased, if, in addition to the *light* already set before him, some of the various inconsistent sentiments of his scheme are contrasted, whereby he may be further assisted to discern, that his scheme must be wrong some where: for the truth is ever consistent with itself.

1. In his first book, he says, (p. 59.) 'A child dedicated to God in baptism is thereby brought into covenant with God, and has a promise left to it of the means of grace, and the strivings of God's holy Spirit, in order to render them effectual for salvation.' But in his second book, he says, (p. 51.) That they must 'submit to a sovereign God.' But if they have 'a *covenant right* to the strivings of the holy Spirit,' if they have 'a promise,' then they do not lie at God's sovereign mercy in the case; but may plead the *covenant* and *promise* of God.

2. In his first book, (p. 8.) he endeavours to prove that the covenant with Abraham, Gen. xvii. was not the covenant of grace, because 'it might be broken.' Which implies, that it had some condition, which, if not fulfilled, all the blessings of it would be forfeited. But in his second book, (p. 60, 61, 62.) he endeavours to prove, that the covenant with Abraham, Gen. xvii. was not the covenant of grace, because it had no conditions, but all the blessings of it were promised to Abaham and his seed 'absolutely and unconditionally;' on which hypothesis this covenant 'could not be broken'. But his two books are not only inconsistent with each other, but this last book is inconsistent with itself. And

to the instances which have already been taken notice of in the preceding sections, some few more may here be pointed out.

3. That man must be a moral agent, possessed of every qualification essential to moral agency, previous, and in order to his being bound by God's law, is a fundamental point with Mr. M. p. 6. 50, &c. That man may be bound by the moral law to be a moral agent, to have the qualifications essential to moral agency, is with him another fundamental point. p. 6. But as these two fundamental points in his scheme are inconsistent with each other, so they cannot both be true. He says, 'Self-love is essential to moral agency;' and yet this essential qualification of a moral agent 'is a duty required of us by God's law.' But according to him, the law cannot bind us unless we are already moral agents. Therefore it cannot bind us to be moral agents. For then a man need not be a moral agent, previous, and in order to his being bound by the moral law; which yet he maintains.

4. He says, (p. 10.) 'That Adam, by becoming guilty, was totally depraved,' and yet according to him Adam's depravity was not total, for he still continued to exercise *that love to himself, which the law of God requires,* in a conformity to which the image of God consisted, in which he was created. p. 6. and p. 12. 'Perhaps' he also continued to exercise toward God 'the love of esteem and benevolence.'

5. He says, (p. 6.) That the divine law requires us 'to love God with all our hearts,' and that it also requires us 'to love ourselves.' And he adds, that this 'self-love is absolutely inconsistent with the love of God.' So that, according to him, the divine law requires of us in our guilty state, *two duties, in their own nature absolutely inconsistent.* And therefore he boldly affirms, that it is 'contrary to the law of God' for us, while in our guilty state, to love God with all our hearts; and yet he says, p. 51. that God has 'given us his law to show us what our duty is.' And that we are *justly condemned to eternal misery* for not obeying of it. And this law he calls 'a glorious law,' and the character exhibited in it he calls 'glorious;' and even supposes that the Son of God became incarnate, lived, and died to 'honour this law,' and to 'vindicate and maintain the honour and dignity of the divine chu-

racter exhibited in it.' p. 22. 26, 27, 28. Whereas for God to give us a rule of duty, requiring things in their own nature absolutely inconsistent, on pain of eternal death, would be an infinite reproach to the Deity. And to give his Son to die to do honour to such a law, would be inconsistent with all his perfections. And yet he asserts that the Gospel, which is supposed to reveal this shocking scene, is 'glorious,' and even 'more glorious than the law;' whereas, if his scheme is true, there is no glory in law, or Gospel; unless it be glorious to require inconsistencies on pain of eternal death; and glorious to do the highest honour, before the whole intellectual system, to a law in its own nature contradictory.

5. He represents the divine law, as requiring things not only inconsistent in their own nature with each other; but also inconsistent with our moral agency. For he says, p. 5. 'A principle of self-love is essential to us moral agents.' And yet he asserts that this 'self-love must be totally excluded from any place' in the heart of a guilty creature, if he loves God. p. 10. For 'Love to God and self-love are absolutely inconsistent.' And so, according to him, the moral law requires of us that love to God, which is inconsistent with our being moral agents. p. 50. 53. And yet, according to him, if we are not moral agents, we cannot be bound by the moral law to any obedience at all. Therefore,

6. He is necessitated to maintain, that man by the fall ceased to be a moral agent, and that it was no longer his duty to love God, for the law did not bind him; 'its binding authority respected not his obedience.' This was the state of Adam before the revelation of a Mediator, 'because it was inconsistent with self-love to exercise true love to God.' p. 50. And he asserts, p. 18. that 'mankind at this day, antecedent to their exercising faith in Christ, are in much the same condition as Adam was after he sinned.' Particularly he says, p. 20. 'that they are under the same inability of loving God that Adam was,' viz. It is 'absolutely inconsistent with that self-love which is essential to moral agency.' And therefore the unregenerate are not moral agents, nor bound by the moral law to obedience. And *where there is no law, there is no transgression.* And therefore Adam's total

depravity which took place after the first sin, was not of a criminal nature: and the same is true of the unregenerate now, who 'are under the same inability of loving God that Adam was.' And therefore total depravity does not disqualify for sealing ordinances.

And yet, in direct contradiction to all this, he affirms, that the unregenerate, while such, are moral agents, bound by the law to the same perfect obedience which was required of Adam before the fall. p. 53. 'This I will readily grant, man is a moral agent, bound by the moral law to love God with all his heart; and therefore God may consistently require this of him, and man is *wholly* to blame for not loving.' For, p. 27. 'nothing short of perfection may be looked upon as the whole of what is required.' For he adds, 'to suppose that God has receded from his original demand of perfection, made in the law, implies that this law was not good,' which is 'evidently a reflection upon the divine Being, whose law it is,' and 'a reproach upon Christ, who has honoured that law.' And accordingly he affirms, p. 51. That 'God has given his law to show us what our duty is;' and he adds, p. 52. 'That by the law is the knowledge of sin.' Which supposes that 'the binding authority of the law does respect our obedience,' as much as it did Adam's before the fall. And that therefore we are moral agents with respect to the law of perfection, as really as he was. And that therefore it is not inconsistent in any child of Adam, with that self-love which is essential to moral agency, to yield a perfect obedience to the moral law. And that therefore we are not all depraved by nature. For this supposed inconsistency, he says, 'is the true reason, and the *only* reason,' of the depravity of our nature. For had it not been for this inconsistency, Adam would have continued to love God after the fall as he did before. p. 44. 'He would have continued still to exercise the same delight in the divine perfections, as he had done before.' And yet he had said, p. 10. 'That Adam, by becoming guilty, was totally depraved.' And if he was totally depraved, and if total depravity and moral agency are consistent, if God 'may consistently require us to love God with all our hearts,' and if we 'are wholly to blame' for not loving;

then our total depravity is totally criminal. But to persist obstinately in this crime, that is, to continue impenitent and unreconciled to God, after all the means used with us by God himself, disqualifies a man to be active in sealing God's covenant, for the same reason that obstinacy in any other crime does. Or if he will say, 'to love God is the same thing as to love misery,' and so our depravity is a calamity, but not a crime; then he must say, that we cease to be moral agents, and the law ceases to bind us: which, to use his own words, 'implies that this law was not good, which is evidently a reflection upon the divine Being, whose law it is, and a reproach upon Christ, who has honoured that law.'

7. Mr. M. is very zealous for a *preparatory work*, and to have the unregenerate sinner *strive*. p. 47—54. But without any consistence with himself. For on his scheme, what can the sinner consistently strive to do? not to love that character of God which is exhibited in the law; for this, according to him, is the same thing as to 'love his own misery,' which is 'contrary to the law,' and in its own nature impossible. Not to love that character of God which is revealed in the Gospel; for the unenlightened sinner is by him supposed not to know it; p. 43. and to love an unknown character, implies a contradiction, and so is absolutely impossible. What then would Mr. M. have the sinner do, or strive to do? Let us attend to his own words, p. 51, 52. God 'has given us his law, not only to show us what our duty is; but also to set *light* before us, whereby we may obtain a proper conviction of our guilt. *By the law, is the knowledge of sin.* He has repeatedly commanded them *to consider their ways;* and calls upon them to exercise their reason. *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord.*' But if God has *given us his law to show us what our duty is*, and if *by the law is the knowledge of sin*, and if we *consider* this, and if we *exercise our reason* on the subject, then we must conclude, that it is now every day the duty of all mankind to love that character of God which is exhibited in the moral law; and that it is the duty of all to whom the Gospel comes, to love that character of God which is revealed in the Gospel; and that it is exceeding sinful to live in the neglect of these duties. But if a sinner should thus be-

gin to *consider* and *exercise his reason*, Mr. M. would soon stop him, by saying, "The unenlightened do not know that character of God which is revealed in the Gospel, and so cannot love it: and to love that character of God which is revealed in the law, is the same thing as to love their own misery, which is contrary to the law, and ought not to be done." What then shall the sinner do? or what shall he strive to do? Mr. M. says, (p. 51.) that 'such a conviction of our guilt, and just desert of suffering the curse of the law, as shall humble us, and bring us to submit to a sovereign God, is necessary to fit and prepare our hearts to close with Christ.' But by what means shall such convictions be obtained? How will you convince the sinner, that he deserves eternal damnation for *not continuing in all things written in the book of the law to do them*, particularly, for *neglecting to love God*, while he firmly believes, that 'the love of God and self-love are absolutely inconsistent?' and that, therefore it is 'contrary to the law,' which requires self-love, to love God. The more the sinner *considers*, and *exercises his reason*, the more clearly will he see the inconsistence of these things.—Or, will Mr. M. tell the sinner, (as in p. 53.) to strive 'to obtain those discoveries of God through Christ, by which he will be reconciled to God?' But why, seeing on Mr. M.'s scheme, the sinner has no prejudices against this character of God to combat and strive against, but is naturally disposed to love it, as soon as known; why, if this be the case, should not *the discoveries*, already made in the bible, be immediately received and embraced? Did not Jacob love Rachel the first time he saw her? or did he spend two or three months, or as many years, after the first sight of her person, *striving for a discovery of her beauty?*

8. Mr. M. says, p. 9. That to Adam, after his fall, it must appear 'in every view, inconsistent with the divine perfections,' that he should escape the curse of the law. But in these circumstances, (p. 10.) 'to delight in God was the same thing as to delight in his own misery;' and therefore, he adds, 'that Adam, by becoming guilty, was totally depraved.' Because now 'the love of God and self-love were absolutely inconsistent.' And he says, (p. 10.) 'This was

the true reason, and the *only* reason, why Adam could not love God after the fall.' And therefore as soon as a door of hope was opened by the revelation of a Mediator, Adam instantly returned to the love of God. 'And there is nothing in our fallen circumstances to prevent' our doing so too. p. 44. And that *without any new principle of grace.* p. 48. But if these things are true, it will follow, 1. That as soon as any man believes that there is forgiveness with God for sinners through Jesus Christ, he will cease to be totally depraved: because now 'the true reason, and the only reason,' of his total depravity, is removed: and therefore, 2. Every man who believes the Gospel to be true, is regenerate. And therefore, 3. Every man who knows, that he believes the Gospel to be true, does with equal certainty know that he is regenerate. Because this belief and regeneration are infallibly connected, according to Mr. M. But, 4. According to him, 'none but such as profess the Christian religion ought to be admitted into the church.' And, 5. According to him, none ought to profess, that they believe the Gospel to be true, unless they are infallibly certain that they do believe it to be true. For, speaking of the profession which is made when any join with the church, he says, (p. 79.) 'Suppose a man brought into a civil court, as a witness to a particular fact; and, being sworn, should positively declare the thing to be fact: and after he comes out of court, his neighbour should ask him, whether he had any certain knowledge of the fact, about which he had given his evidence: and he should say, "No, I am not certain of it; but I hope it is so, it is my prevailing opinion; although I must confess, I have many doubts and fears, whether there is any truth in it, or not." Would not all mankind agree to call such a one a perjured person, who had taken a false oath?' No one, therefore, according to his scheme, may profess that he believes the Gospel to be true, unless he is infallibly certain of the fact, that he does believe it to be true. But if regeneration and this belief are infallibly connected, then this professor must be infallibly certain of his regeneration, and so not one soul, on Mr. M.'s scheme, may, or can be admitted into the church, as graceless. And thus his scheme overthrows itself.

Nor is there any way to avoid this, but for Mr. M. to say, "A man may be infallibly certain of the truth of the Gospel, and so of God's readiness to be reconciled to sinners, as therein revealed; and yet after all remain totally depraved, and an enemy to God." But to say this, would be to give up the fundamental principle on which his whole scheme is built, viz. that 'the true and the only reason' of total depravity, is the apprehension, that it is inconsistent with the divine perfections to forgive sin. In which view 'self-love and the love of God are inconsistent.' And if this is given up, his whole scheme sinks of course. For if this is not *the true and only reason* of total depravity, he is wholly wrong, from the foundation to the top stone. And if an apprehension that it is inconsistent with the divine perfections to forgive sin, is *the true and only reason* of total depravity, then a belief that God can consistently forgive sin, would at once regenerate us. For it is an old maxim, *remove the cause and the effect will cease.* Every man, therefore, according to Mr. M. who believes the Gospel to be true, is at once reconciled to God. Nor may any be received into the church, until they believe it to be true. And so no graceless man, as such, can be admitted into the church. Because no infidel, as such, may be admitted. And all but infidels are regenerate, if Mr. M.'s scheme is true. And then the scheme of religion which he has advanced, in order to support the external covenant, were it true, would effectually overthrow the grand point he had in view.

SECTION XI.

The extraordinary methods Mr. Mather has taken to support his scheme, and keep himself in countenance.

THE ordinary methods of supporting religious principles, by Scripture and reason, which Mr. M. has taken to support his external covenant, we have already attended to. And I

think Mr. M. is much to be commended for coming out boldly, like an honest man, and giving the public such an honest account of his scheme of religion, by which he designed to support what he had advanced in his former piece concerning the external covenant. If every writer on that side of the question would do the same, the controversy would soon come to an end.

But there are various other methods, which Mr. M. has taken to keep himself in countenance, and to persuade his readers that his scheme is right, and that the plan is wrong on which the churches in New-England were formed, when this country was first settled: and particularly, that the Synod at Saybrook were wrong, in that resolve which they unanimously came into, viz. "That none ought to be admitted as members, in order to full communion in all the special ordinances of the Gospel, but such as credibly profess a cordial subjection to Jesus Christ:" Various other methods, I say, of a different nature, and which are not so commendable.

1. One extraordinary method he takes to keep himself in countenance is, to pretend that I had 'wholly misrepresented his sentiments,' and given his scheme 'the bad name of a graceless covenant,' and pointed 'all my arguments, not against any thing that he had written,' nor so much as 'essayed to confute one single argument' that he had offered. This pretence is very extraordinary, 1. Because, if his covenant is not a *graceless covenant*, it will not answer the end by him proposed. For if it does not promise its blessings to graceless men, as such, upon graceless conditions; then graceless men, as such, with only graceless qualifications, cannot enter into it. For he affirms, that none can consistently profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, without the most full and perfect assurance. p. 78, 79, 80. 2. This pretence is very extraordinary, because he had in his first book, (p. 58.) declared his external covenant, in express terms, to be 'distinct from the covenant of grace;' and in this second book sets himself professedly to prove the same point over again. p. 60, 61, 62. But if his external covenant is 'distinct from the covenant of grace,' it is either the *covenant of works* or a *graceless covenant*, or a *covenant which requires no condi-*

tions at all: for no other sort of covenant can be thought of. But if Mr. M.'s external covenant is absolute and unconditional, then a Pagan, a Turk, or a Jew, as such, hath as good right to the Lord's table, as to hear the Gospel preached. And if his external covenant is the same with the covenant of works, then no mere man since the fall is qualified to join with the church. And if his external covenant is the covenant of grace, then no graceless man, as such, is qualified to enter into it and seal it. It is, therefore, nay, it must be, a *graceless covenant*, or nothing at all. 3. This pretence is very extraordinary, because Mr. M. was so pinched with what I had advanced against his scheme, that he had no way to get rid of my arguments, but to deny first principles, and give up the doctrines contained in the public approved formulas of the church of Scotland, and the churches in New-England, and advance a *new scheme* of religion, never before published in New-England. And why did not he point out at least *one single argument* of his, which he judged to be unanswered? Or why did not he mention *one single instance*, wherein I had represented his covenant to be more *graceless* than it was? Or what need was there, if I had said nothing to the purpose, to expose himself and his cause, by the publication of such a system of *new notions*, to make all the country stare [i]?

i Mr. M. offered five arguments, in his first book, (p. 7, 8.) to support his external covenant. These five arguments the reader may find answered, in my former piece, p. 16, 17, 18. 65, 66. 69. And if he will read my piece through, he may find the two points fully proved, which I undertook to prove, on which the whole controversy turns, viz. That there is but one covenant, of which baptism and the Lord's supper are seals, even the covenant of grace; and that the doctrine of an external graceless covenant is unscriptural. Some wonder why Mr. M. did not make a particular reply, and wonder more why, instead of a particular reply, he should advance such an inconsistent, absurd, shocking scheme of religion, in support of the external covenant, which instead of supporting, rather tends to sink it. For, say they, if the external covenant cannot be supported without going into this scheme of religion, we will give it up. But I wonder not at Mr. M.'s conduct in all this. The external covenant cannot be supported but by overthrowing the scripture scheme of religion, and establishing Mr. M.'s scheme in its room. His scheme of religion is absolutely necessary to support his external covenant. Without the introduction of Mr. M.'s new scheme of religion, my former piece can receive no answer at all. He could not be silent. He must take this way, or none at all.

2. The loud out-cry which he makes of new divinity, new divinity, is another of the extraordinary methods which he takes to keep himself in countenance. And it is very extraordinary in him, to raise this cry, on this occasion, in answer to me, and that when he himself was writing such an answer. 1. Because I was justifying the old scheme, on which our churches in this country were originally settled, the good old way; and he wrote with a design to bring in a new scheme, called by the name of the external covenant, both name and thing unknown in all the public formulas approved by our churches, and absolutely inconsistent with some of the fundamental articles of our confession of faith, and catechisms. 2. Because, in order to justify the good old way, and confute his new scheme, I built my arguments on the good old protestant doctrines of *the perfection of the divine law*, and *total depravity*, as held forth in scripture, and in our public formulas, without any one new sentiment; yea, without expressing old sentiments in stronger language than the language of Scripture, and of that confession of faith, which Mr. M. himself professes to believe. While, on the other hand, Mr. M. was writing not only in defence of a new scheme, but endeavouring to justify it by a whole system of new divinity, never before advanced, so far as I know, in New-England. However, it is not entirely new. It was some years ago published in London, by Mr. Cudworth, and an answer to it was printed in Boston, 1762, in *An Essay on the nature and glory of the Gospel*, before referred to.

3. Another extraordinary method which he takes to keep himself in countenance, is, to impute the most absurd and odious doctrines to those whom he opposes, which neither they, nor any christian writer, ever believed, to be true. Particularly, "That the enmity of the carnal mind against God consists in disinterested malice. That in regeneration new natural faculties are created in us. That the unregenerate, being without these new natural faculties, let their hearts be ever so good, are under a natural impossibility of hearkening to the call of the Gospel. That we must be willing to be damned in order to be prepared for Christ. That Christ has no hand in our reconciliation to God." To be sure, I was ne-

ver acquainted with any man, or any book, which held these points. Should it be affirmed concerning a very poor, and very lazy man, that *although he is convinced in his conscience, that it is his duty and interest to be industrious; yet the more he thinks of it the more averse he feels to it:* would this amount to saying, that this lazy man has *a disinterested malice against industry?* Or should it be affirmed concerning the unregenerate, that *God hath not given them eyes to see nor ears to hear;* would this amount to saying, that they are destitute of eyes and ears, considered as natural faculties, and so can neither see nor hear; and therefore are not at all to blame for their spiritual blindness and deafness? Or, should a wise and good father, when his impudent haughty child, about to be corrected for a crime, insolently say, *well, father, if you do whip me, I shall never love you again as long as I live;* should a wise and good father say to such a child, 'You deserve to be whipped, nor will I ever forgive you until you will own that it is good enough for you, and that it is not a blemish, but a beauty in your father's character, to be disposed to maintain good government in his house,' would that amount to saying, that *the child must be willing to be whipped in order to prepare him for a pardon?* Or, if by the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit, communicated through Jesus Christ, the only Mediator, as the fruits of his purchase, the holiness and justice of the divine nature are viewed as a beauty in the divine character, by the true penitent, will it hence follow, 'that there was no need of Christ to die, or to be exalted, that through him, *repentance and remission of sins* might be given unto us, consistently with the divine law.' It is true that there is no need of Christ to make us amends for the injury done us in the divine law, and so to reconcile our angry minds to the Deity, and bring us to forgive our Maker. Such a Christ would suit the taste of a carnal heart. But a true penitent, having a new taste, already grants that God and his law are wholly right, perfect in beauty, without a blemish, prior to the consideration of the gift of Christ: and this prepares him to see the wisdom and grace of God, in giving his Son to die upon the cross, in the manner, and for the purpose, set forth in the Gospel. Rom. iii. 25. 1 Cor. i. 18.

4. Another extraordinary method Mr. M. has taken, is to insinuate, that the sacramental controversy turns on these absurd doctrines. Whereas, in truth, he cannot produce an instance of any one writer, on our side of the question, who ever believed these absurd doctrines, much less ever built his arguments on them. Let him read Mr. Richard Baxter, Dr. Watts, Dr. Guise, Dr. Doddridge, Mr. Henry, Mr. Flavel, and look through the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and Catechisms, and read over President Edwards, Mr. Green, and others in these parts of the world, who have written on the subject, and he will not find a syllable to countenance him in such an insinuation. Nay, the chief of the arguments used, by writers on our side of the question, are conclusive, to prove that baptism and the Lord's supper are seals of the covenant of grace, and of no other covenant, without entering into any dispute about the perfection of the divine law, total depravity, regeneration, &c. &c. The point is so clear and plain, that Calvinists, Arminians, Neonomians, Arians, &c. have agreed in this, while they have differed in almost every thing else. If we may believe Dr. Increase Mather, it was, in his day, the 'common doctrine' *of protestants in opposition to papists,* 'that it is a justifying faith only which giveth right to baptism before God,' how much soever they differed in other matters. And as to all the orthodox, the celebrated Dr. Van Mastricht, in his Treatise on Regeneration, says, 'As to the baptism of *adults,* that, if *rightly* administered, doth by the consent of *all the orthodox,* certainly presuppose regeneration as already effected.'——But this leads me to observe,

5. Another very extraordinary method Mr. M. takes to keep himself in countenance, is by misrepresenting that plan, unanimously agreed to by the synod at Saybrook, and on which the churches in New-England, in general, were formed at the first settling of the country, which alone I was endeavouring to justify, 'as a very groundless and unreasonable notion of the Anabaptists, in which Dr. Bellamy and a few others have joined with them.' p. 66. And at the same time claiming the Westminster assembly, Mr. Shepard, Mr. Jonathan Dickinson, and Mr. Peter Clark, as friends to *his exter-*

nal covenant. So that one would think, that scarce any are on our side of the question, but the Anabaptists. Now this is very extraordinary in Mr. M. 1. Because, in his former book he speaks a very different language, well knowing how the matter really stands. (p. 59.)—'Shall I then prevail with them, to lay aside all prejudice, all attachment to *received maxims*, all veneration for *great names*.' For he had before him the sentiments of the protestant world, collected by the late learned Mr. Foxcroft, in an appendix to president Edwards' Inquiry, &c. And he well knew that *received maxims* and *great names*, stood in the way of his *new scheme*. 2. It is very extraordinary that he should say, that *his external covenant* is *included in the covenant of grace*, described by *the assembly of divines at Westminster*, (p. 61.) when, as has been before shown, the doctrines of *the perfection of the divine law*, and of *total depravity*, as held by that assembly, are inconsistent with *the existence of his external covenant*. And in their *Confession of Faith*, (chap. 29.) they, say '*all ungodly persons*, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with him, so are they unworthy of the Lord's table, and cannot, without great sin against Christ, while they continue such, partake of these holy mysteries, or be admitted thereto.' Whereas, the very professed design of his external covenant is to open a door, that *ungodly men*, as such, *should be admitted to partake of these holy mysteries*. And, 3. It is equally extraordinary that he should pretend that Mr. Jonathan Dickinson was a friend *to his external covenant*, when, in his Dialogue on *the Divine right of Infant Baptism*, he proves that the covenant with Abraham, Gen. xvii. was the covenant of grace itself, in opposition to the Anabaptists, who, with Mr. M. maintain the covenant with Abraham, Gen. xvii. was not the covenant of grace. And, having proved that covenant to be the covenant of grace, then proceeds, on this hypothesis, to prove *the divine right of infant baptism*. Dr. Gill wrote an answer to this piece of Mr. Dickinson's: Mr. Peter Clark wrote a reply to Dr. Gill, in which he spends above a hundred pages in proving the covenant in Gen. xvii. to be '*a pure covenant of grace*,' in answering Dr. Gill's objections, which are the same for substance with Mr. M.'s *Five Arguments*, in

his first book, (p. 7, 8.) and in establishing infant baptism on this foundation. And he expressly affirms, (p. 208.) '*Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* And if, without regeneration, no man can enter into the kingdom of God, then surely not into covenant with God.' But the unregenerate, as such, can enter into covenant with God, on the plan of Mr. M.'s *external covenant.* And yet Mr. M. pretends that there is 'no material difference' between these authors and his scheme. But, 4. It is more extraordinary still, that Mr. M. should bring in Mr. Shepard as a friend to *his external covenant,* when the piece he refers to, (p. 61.) is not wrote on Mr. M.'s scheme, but on a scheme essentially different; and when Mr. Shepard, in his *sermons on the parable of the ten virgins* has so plainly declared his mind. These are his very words: attend to them, candid reader, and say, was Mr. Shepard in Mr. M.'s scheme?

'We may see hence one just ground of that diligent and narrow search and trial, churches here do or should make of all those whom they receive to be fellow-members. The Lord Jesus will make a very strict search and examination of wise and foolish, when he comes, and will put a difference between them then. May not men nor churches imitate the Lord Jesus according to their light now? If indeed all the congregation of the baptised were holy, then, as Korah said, *they take too much upon them.* If Christ at his coming, would make neither examination, nor separation, not only of people baptised at large, but of professors, and glorious professors of his truth and name; if churches were not set to discern between harlots and virgins, foolish virgins and wise, as much as in them lies, that so some of the glory of Christ may be seen in his churches here, as well as at the last day; then the gate might be opened wide, and flung off the hinges too, for all comers; and you might call the churches of Christ the inn and tavern of Christ to receive all strangers, if they will pay for what they call for, and bear scot and lot in the town, and not the house and temple of Christ only to entertain his friends. But, (beloved,) the church hath the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and what they bind and loose, following the example and rule of Christ, is bound and loosed in

heaven, and they judge in the room of Christ. 1 Cor. v. 4, 5. 2 Cor. ii. 11. Whom the church casts out, and bids depart to satan, Christ doth. Whom the church receives to itself, Christ doth. We should receive in none but such as have visible right to Christ, and communion of saints. None have a right to Christ in his ordinances, but such as shall have communion with Christ at his coming to judge the world. Hence, if we could be so eagle-eyed as to discern them now that are hypocrites, we should exclude them now, as Christ will, because they have no right. But that we cannot do; the Lord will therefore do it for his churches. But yet let the churches learn from this to do what they can for the Lord now.—The apostle gives a sad charge, Heb. xii. 15. *Look diligently, lest a root of bitterness grow up.* The apostle doth not say, it is no matter what roots you set in Christ's garden; only when they spring up, and begin to seed and infect others, then have a care of them: but look there be not a root there.—*Look diligently to it.*—It is ill counsel to the gardener to say, Have a care to weed your garden; but it is no matter, God looks not that you should be careful of your seed, so long as it be seed. Nay, the Lord that forbids me to suffer weeds to grow, forbids my carelessness in sowing what seeds I please. It is the judgment of some divines, that the first sin of Adam and his wife, was in suffering the serpent to enter into the garden, uncalled for. *The ruin of a church may be the letting in of some one ill member.*

'Objection. *But the primitive church never received in any with such strict confessions, and large examination; three thousand in a day were admitted.*

'*Ans.* I remember a godly divine, in answering an objection of late repentance from the example of the thief; having whipt it with many other rods, at the last lasheth it with this, *it is an extraordinary case*; and hence not to be brought in for an ordinary example. Hence he speaks thus; when therefore the time comes that Christ shall come and be crucified again, and thou one of the thieves to be crucified with him, and it fall out that thou be the best of the two, then shalt thou be saved by Christ, that despising Christ now, puts off thy repentance till then; so I say here, there is somewhat

imitable and ordinary in the apostle's example, in admitting three thousand in a day, but something unusual, and far different from our condition now; and therefore that I would say, when the time comes, that the spirit is poured out on all flesh; and that time is known to be the spring-tide, and large measure of the Spirit, when ministers are so honoured as to convert many thousands at a sermon; and so God and reason call for quickness; when elders of churches are as sharp-sighted as the apostles; when the conversion of men also shall be most eminent, and that in such places where it is death, or half hanging, to profess the Lord Jesus; as that they shall be pricked at their hearts, gladly receive the word, lay down their necks on the block, cast down all their estates at the church's feet, out of love to God's ordinances; when men shall not have Christian education, the example and crowd of Christians, from the teeth outwardly, to press them to the door of the church, as those times had not; then, for my part, if three hundred thousand were converted, I should receive them as gladly, and as manifestly, as they receive Christ. But truly there is such little takings now, that we have leisure enough to look upon our money, and the hypocrisy of the world gives us good reason to stay and see.' Mr. *Shepard's sermons on the parable*, &c. part 2. p. 184, &c. This sermon was preached at Cambridge, near Boston, about the year 1640, and so about 130 years ago, ten years after they began to settle Boston, by one of the most godly and most celebrated ministers then in the country, a few years before his death. And this passage shows us the spirit of the godly in New-England, in those early days. And to all godly people in the country, the name of Mr. Shepard is precious to this day, and Mr. M. knew it; and therefore, to keep himself in countenance, thinks fit to bring in him as a friend to *his external covenant*. But is not this an extraordinary method? To omit the rest, we will mention but one instance more.

6. Another extraordinary method Mr. M. takes to support his scheme, is to bring arguments against us, built on principles which he himself does not believe to be true; and which, if they were true, would infallibly overthrow his own

scheme. Nay, and persist in such arguments, after their fallacy has been pointed out, without saying one word in excuse for such a piece of conduct.

Thus he insists upon it, that if infants may have the seal of the covenant without saving grace, then also may the adult. And therefore, saving grace is not needful to qualify any one for sealing ordinances. And therefore, the covenant to be sealed, is not the covenant of grace, but an external covenant, 'distinct from the covenant of grace,' which only requires, as a necessary qualification for sealing ordinances, that sinners should be under such 'convictions,' as to 'come to a fixed resolution to forsake all known sin, and practise all known duty.' But have all infants these *convictions*, and such *a fixed resolution*? Does he believe they have? Is there any evidence of it? No; he does not believe they have. Nor is there any evidence, that there ever was one infant since the world began, that had these *convictions*, and such *a fixed resolution*. What then does Mr. M. mean? Does he mean to give up infant baptism? no, by no means. What then does he mean? Odd as it is, he means to confute our scheme by an argument which confutes his own; i. e. by an argument, built on a principle which he himself does not believe to be true, viz. *That the same qualifications are necessary in infants as in the adult, to qualify them for baptism.* For Mr. M. does not believe this principle to be true. For he does not believe that infants need any qualification at all. And yet he does believe that the adult must have some qualification. Now how extraordinary is it, for a man of learning to conduct thus; and to go on and persevere in this conduct without a blush, or the least excuse, in the sight of all the country, after the absurdity had been pointed out before his eyes, in my former book, p. 64, 65, 66.

And thus again, he insists upon it, that if saving grace is necessary, then no man can with a good conscience join with the church, without assurance, an assurance equal to that certainty which we have of facts, which we see with our own eyes, and to the truth of which we can give oath before any civil court. p. 78, 79. But 'ninety-nine in a hundred of true believers' are destitute of this assurance, he says, (p. 80.)

and therefore, saving grace is not needful. Nothing more is needful, than to come to a fixed resolution to forsake all known sin and practise all known duty. But does Mr. M. believe that no man can, with a good conscience, join with the church, without being thus infallibly certain that he has the requisite qualifications? for on the supposed truth of this proposition is his argument built. But does Mr. M. believe this proposition? does he teach his people to believe it? had all his church-members this high degree of infallible assurance, that they had the requisite qualifications, when they joined with the church? and have they the infallible assurance every time they attend sealing ordinances; an assurance equal to that certainty, which they have, that they ever saw the sun shine! That they '*are come to a fixed resolution to forsake all known sin, and practise all known duty*? Does he insist upon it in his public preaching, and in his private instructions, that without this high degree of assurance, without this infallible certainty, they cannot with a good conscience come to baptism or to the Lord's table? that 'they are guilty of gross prevarication, and double-dealing with God,' if they do? p. 82. Because no man ought to come without this infallible certainty, that he has the requisite qualifications: I say, does Mr. M. believe these things himself? or does he teach them to his own people? I appeal to his conscience. I appeal to his people, for my witnesses. Mr. M. does not believe that men must have this infallible certainty, that they have the requisite qualifications, in order to attend sealing ordinances with a good conscience. Nor does he teach this doctrine to his people. What then does he mean, in all he says upon this subject to us? Why, he means to confute our scheme, by an argument built on a principle which he does not believe to be true; and which, were it true, would effectually overthrow his own scheme. And all this, after the fallacy of this manner of reasoning had been pointed out before his eyes, as clear as the sun, in Mr. Edwards' last piece on the sacramental controversy, to which no answer has ever been made. Now is it not extraordinary, that a man of so good sense, should urge against us arguments built on principles which he himself does not believe; and which, if

they were true, would effectually overthrow his own scheme? For no unregenerate man in this world is, or ever was, or ever will be, while such, infallibly certain, as he is of what he sees with his eyes, that his resolution to forsake all known sin, and practise all known duty, is 'fixed,' so that his religion will not prove like that of the stony and thorny ground hearers. For if the common protestant doctrine of the *saints' perseverance* is scriptural, yet Mr. M. does not believe the doctrine of the *perseverance of graceless sinners*, in their religious resolutions, is taught in scripture. So that there is no possible way in which an awakened sinner can be certain that his resolution is 'fixed,' without an immediate revelation from heaven, to give him this assurance. But Mr. M. does not believe, that an immediate revelation from heaven ever was, or ever will be, made for this purpose. But he well knows, that without any such revelation, Peter was able to say, *Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.* And he well knew that the saints in the apostolic age are spoken of, without exception, as having *received the spirit of adoption, whereby they cried Abba, Father*; with an assurance that they *were the children of God.* Rom. viii. 14, 15, 16. Nor is there one instance, among all the apostolic converts, that can be mentioned, of a *doubting saint.* Nor does it appear, by the acts of the apostles, or by their epistles, but that 'assurance did in those days attend the first acts of faith among all their converts.' See Acts ii. 41—47. and viii. 39. and x. 44—47. and xvi. 30—34. For, to use the apostolic language, "Being justified by faith, they had peace with God, and rejoiced in hope of the glory of God: because the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost." Rom. v. 15. *And they knew that they had passed from death to life.* 1 John iii. 14. And this renders the conduct of Mr. M. so much the more extraordinary, that he with so much zeal, should push an argument, which, were it well grounded, is much more against his own scheme than it is against the apostolic practice. For it does not appear but that their converts universally *knew that they were passed from death to life.* Whereas it is capable of full proof, that no one unregenerate man ever did know that his religious resolutions

were 'fixed,' so that his goodness should not be as the morning cloud and as the early dew, which quickly passeth away.

Besides, we are naturally as conscious of our volitions and affections, as we are of our speculations; and therefore we are as capable of knowing what we choose and love, as what we believe: and therefore, we may as well know that we love God and Christ, if we really do, as know that we have right speculative ideas of the true and real character of God and Christ, and of the doctrines of revealed religion, in which they are exhibited. Many are confident they *believe aright*, who are heretics; and many are confident they *love aright*, who are hypocrites: and yet this hinders not but that true saints, who believe aright, and love in sincerity, may know it: and know the one as well as the other. And it cannot be proved, but that there are as many who have doubts about the truth of Gospel doctrines, as there are that have doubts about the sincerity of their love to Gospel doctrines. It cannot be proved, that there is one professor who doubts the sincerity of his love, who has an infallible assurance which is the right scheme of religion, among all the schemes in vogue. It is very evident, that there is a great degree of scepticism among the professors of Christianity in this age, and as much among the learned as among the unlearned; as is obvious to every one who is acquainted with books and men. And, for aught that appears, it might be as difficult to find men who believe Christianity to be true, real Christianity I mean, to that degree as to have no doubts about what is truth; as to find men that love it, so as to have no doubts about their love. This is certain, that it was the constant doctrine of Mr. Stoddard, that *no unregenerate man does know the Gospel to be true*, as every one knows who is acquainted with his writings. And it is also certain, that in the apostolic age, it was the universally received doctrine of the whole Christian church, that *whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.* 1 John v. 1. And it was in that age believed, that the unregenerate, however they might, for a time, believe and rejoice; yet neither their faith, nor their affections, were 'fixed,' because they had *no root* in themselves: and therefore in time of temptation they would

fall away from both. Mat. xiii. And therefore, if we open the door wide enough to let in the unregenerate, as such, into the church, we must not insist on their being 'fixed' what to believe, or 'fixed' what to do; for there is *no root* in them. Much less must we affirm, that they must be 'infallibly certain' that they are 'fixed,' when, if the bible is the word of God, it is infallibly certain, that they are not 'fixed.' And their very confidence, that they are 'fixed,' is a full proof that they do not understand and believe the Gospel, which declares that they are not 'fixed,' that they have *no root* in themselves.

But to return:

Our author says, (p. 79.) 'If it is a real gracious state, that gives us a real right to join with the church; then it is a known gracious state that gives us a known right.' And he adds, 'This is a self-evident proposition.' And this he says in order to prove, 'that no man can, with a good conscience, make this profession, without as certain a knowledge of the gracious state of his own heart, as he must have of any particular fact about which he is called to give an evidence in a civil court.' But if this argument is conclusive, then his own scheme is overthrown. For, turn the tables, and the argument stands thus:

"If it is real orthodoxy, that gives us a right to join with the church; then it is known orthodoxy, that gives us a known right." And I may add, 'this is a self-evident proposition.' And therefore, according to Mr. M. "no man can with a good conscience, join with the church, without as certain a knowledge of his orthodoxy, as he must have of any particular fact about which he is called to give an evidence in a civil court." So then, according to Mr. M. unregenerate, graceless men, must be as certain which of all the various schemes of religion in vogue, in the Christian world, is the right one, as they are of any fact which they see with their eyes, to the truth of which they can make oath; or they cannot, with a good conscience, join with the church: i. e. they must have as high a degree of infallibility as the apostles had under inspiration, or they cannot, with a good conscience, join with the church. But does Mr. M.

believe this? Does he look upon his graceless, conscientious church-members, as infallible as the apostles?

To say, that real orthodoxy is not a requisite qualification, is to give up his own scheme. To say, that although real orthodoxy is a requisite qualification, yet a degree of infallibility, equal to that which the apostles had under inspiration, is not necessary to qualify a man, with a good conscience, to join with the church, is to give up his argument. For the apostles were not more certain, which was the orthodox scheme of religion, than we are of facts, which we see with our eyes, and which we can swear positively, that we did see. And our certainty must be equal to this, he says, or we cannot, with a good conscience, join with the church. Every conscientious, graceless church-member, therefore, according to Mr. M. is as infallible, in points of orthodoxy, as was the apostle Paul. But does Mr. M. believe this? No, by no means. What then does he mean? Why, he means to confute our scheme, by an argument built on a principle which he himself does not believe to be true; and which, were it true, would overthrow his own scheme.

Ojection. *But I know that I believe such and such doctrines; yea, I can swear I believe them.*

Answer. You can swear that you believe your own creed; but can you swear that your own creed is orthodox? For not a confident belief, but real orthodoxy is, according to Mr. M. a requisite qualification to church-membership. Therefore, according to him, you must be certain that your creed is orthodox; even as certain as you are of facts which you see, and to the truth of which you can make oath before the civil magistrate; which is a degree of certainty equal to that which the apostles had under inspiration.

The Arians, the Socinians, the Pelagians, the Papists, &c. &c. can swear that they believe their schemes; but does this qualify them to be church-members? Would Mr. M. receive them to communion? If so, then it is no matter what scheme of religion men believe, if they do but believe it confidently. And then orthodoxy is not a requisite qualification for church-membership, but rather bigotry!

Our author says, p. 78, 79. 'This affair of covenanting with God, Moses styles, Deut. xxix. 14. *This covenant and this oath.*' And 'will it do to tell people, that they may give a positive evidence, when they have only a prevailing opinion about the fact?' That is, will it do, to tell people that they may enter into covenant with God, and bind themselves under the solemnity of an oath, as the Israelites did to keep covenant, (Deut. xxvi. 27. *Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken to his voice,*) when they have only a prevailing opinion, that they have *such an heart in them;* but have not a certain knowledge of it, as they have of facts, which under oath, they can positively declare to be true?

Answer 1. When men have not *such a heart in them,* they are not qualified to enter into *this covenant and this oath.* And therefore, if unregeneracy consists in being without such an heart, and in having an heart opposite hereunto, agreeable to St. Paul's doctrine, Rom. viii. 7. then unregeneracy disqualifies us for entering into covenant with God.

2. No man can, with a good conscience, enter into this covenant, unless he is conscious to himself, that he has such an heart, to such a degree of clearness, as to be satisfied in his conscience, that he indeed has such an heart. And therefore, for men who know that they have not such an heart, to enter into this covenant, is gross immorality. But he who is satisfied in his conscience, that he has such an heart, may with a good conscience enter into this covenant. That is, his conscience will approve of his conduct in so doing.

3. A man may be satisfied in his conscience, that he has such an heart by prevailing evidence, short of strict certainty. For instance, Mr. Mather was satisfied in his conscience, that it was his duty to write in the defence of the external covenant, upon prevailing evidence of its truth; but yet if it were put to him, he would not positively declare under oath, that he knows it to be true; as he knows the truth of facts which he sees with his eyes. For he declares in his preface, 'Yet I am not so fond of my own judgment, or tenacious of my own practice, but that *I stand ready to give them both up*

when any one shall do the friendly office of setting light before me.' And therefore he cannot swear that his scheme is the true Scripture scheme. He knows that he has written on this subject. This fact he is certain of. He could give oath to this before a civil court. Nor could he give up the truth of this fact, let all the light in the world be set before him. Nor could he with a good conscience, offer to give up the truth of this fact, on any condition: because he knows that the fact is true. He knows it with certainty, with infallible certainty. But he has not equal certainty that his scheme is true. It was only his prevailing opinion. And so, he offers to give it up on further light. Yet he acted conscientiously in writing in its defence. That is, his conscience, instead of condemning, approved of his conduct. For the truth of this I appeal to Mr. M. The application is easy. And yet,

4. It is readily granted, that we are to blame for every wrong judgment we make in moral matters, relative both to truth and duty, how conscientious soever we were in making the judgment. Thus, for instance, Paul, before his conversion, was conscientious in judging and acting against Christianity; but still he was to blame for judging and acting as he did. And if Mr. M.'s external covenant is unscriptural, how conscientious soever he has been in believing and acting as he has, yet he is to blame. So, if we judge that we have such an heart, when in fact we have not, how conscientious soever we have been, yet still we are criminal. For we might have known better. It was our fault that we did not know better. And in this world, or in the next, we shall know that the blame lies at our door. Therefore,

5. Those words of our blessed Saviour ought to be attended to and regarded, by every one who entertains thoughts of making a profession of his holy religion. Luke xiv. 25—35. *And there went great multitudes with him*, and instead of pressing them to an inconsiderate profession of his religion, as a means of their conversion, *he turned and said unto them, if any man come to me*, by an open public profession, *and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also*, so as to have an

heart to give up all for my sake, *he cannot be my disciple*; but will in time of trial desert me. *And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me*, with a heart to suffer every thing for my sake, *cannot be my disciple*; but will in time of trial desert me. Therefore, consider what you do. *For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost*, &c. &c. *So likewise, whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.* My disciples are the salt of the earth. *Salt is good*, if it is salt; *but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned.* It is good for nothing. *It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill: but men cast it out*, as good for nothing. And what are such disciples good for, who will desert me in time of trial. Attend to what I say. *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

CONCLUSION.

Mr. M. speaking of our sentiments of religion, as contained in president *Edwards' treatise concerning religious affections*, which is beyond doubt one of the best books that has been published on experimental religion and vital piety since the days of inspiration, says, (p. 36.) 'These sentiments are surprisingly spread in the land, in the present day.' Yes, and always will spread among people, in proportion as true religion revives and spreads. Nor am I without hopes, that Mr. M. should he thoroughly look into the scheme, and get a right understanding of it, would yet himself become a proselyte to it; and if he should become a proselyte to it, he would soon give up his external covenant, as being wholly inconsistent with it.

And it is quite certain, that when the divine promises, scattered through the sacred writings, relative to the glorious prevalence of true Christianity, come to be accomplished, that Mr. M.'s graceless covenant will become a useless and an impracticable thing. When *nations shall be born in a day*; when *all the people shall be righteous*, when *the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth as the waters cover the sea*; people will not desire to make a graceless profession. Nay, they can never be persuaded to do it in that day. For then they

will *love Christ more than father, or mother, or wife, or children, or houses, or lands; yea, more than their own lives.* And men who really love their wives and children, are able, ordinarily, to say with truth and a good conscience, that they do love them. Yea, it would be thought a sign, that men, generally, if not universally, hated their wives, in any kingdom, city, or town, should it be known, that 'ninety-nine in an hundred of them had such doubts, that with a good conscience they could not say that they loved them. Mr. Stoddard, in his *Treatise concerning the Nature of Conversion*, says, (p. 79.) 'We do not know of one godly man in the Scripture, that was under darkness about his sincerity.' And our catechism says, 'The benefits which in this life do either accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, are *assurance of God's love*, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end.' And when religion revives in its purity and glory, assurance will become as common a thing among professors, as it was among the apostolic converts, in the apostolic churches. And even now, should a man and woman present themselves before a clergyman, to enter into the marriage-covenant, and at the same time declare, that they doubted their love to each other to such a degree, that with a good conscience they could not give their consent to *the form of words* in common use, because that would imply a profession of mutual love, no judicious man would think them fit to be married. The application is easy.

Nothing renders a graceless covenant needful, but the prevalence of gracelessness among our people. For did our people all of them *love Christ more than father and mother, wife and children*, no man would desire to have the covenant of grace set aside, and a graceless covenant substituted in its room, in our churches. When, therefore, that day comes in which *satan shall be bound*, who at present *deceives the nations of the earth*, that he may *deceive them no more*: when the great *harvest* comes, of which what happened in the apostolic age was but *the first fruits*; and *the stone cut out of the mountain without hands becomes great, and fills the whole earth*, and *the God of heaven sets up a kingdom*, and *all peo-*

ple, nations, and languages, serve him, and *the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven is given to the people of the saints of the Most High, and all dominion shall serve him;* then, even then, true godliness will be universally professed, and universally practised.

Since, therefore, this graceless covenant will ere long be universally exploded, and *rooted up,* as shall *every plant which our heavenly Father hath not planted,* why should not we all now unite to give it up, and to invite our people to become Christians indeed, to profess and practise according to the true import of their baptism? It is as much their duty, and as much their interest, to become Christians now, as it will be in any future period of their lives. They have from God no leave to delay. Thanks be to God, 'that these sentiments are surprisingly spreading in this land, in the present day.' Nor ought it to pass unnoticed, that every attempt to prevent their spreading has hitherto had the contrary effect. For while those who oppose them, how ingenious and learned soever they be, are obliged to run into the grossest absurdities and inconsistencies, in their own defence; as one error leads on to another, it naturally tends to open the eyes of all candid men, who attend to the controversy. And may we not hope that so candid and ingenious a writer as Mr. Mather is represented to be, 'who is not fond of his own judgment, or tenacious of his own practice, but stands ready to give them both up, when any one shall do him the friendly office of setting light before him,' will, upon a calm review of all that has been said, become a friend to *the good old way* of our forefathers, the first settlers of New-England, and come into that plan on which the New-England churches were originally formed.—Which may God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ. AMEN.

A

LETTER

TO SCRIPTURISTA.

SIR,

FROM the first settling of New-England, it has been the constant practice of all our *congregational churches*, to require a public assent to the chief articles of the Christian faith, as a *term of communion* in special ordinances. Nor is there to this day, one such church, or, to be sure, not above one, that ever I heard of, but what insists upon such a public assent, as that, without which they will not admit any to sealing ordinances. Our churches have formulas, which they call *the doctrines of faith*, or *the articles of the Christian faith*. The minister publicly reads them to such as are to be taken into full communion; and they give their assent to them before all the congregation. For our churches believe, (and act upon it,) that none ought to be admitted to full communion, but such as are sound in the faith; and that the church has a right to judge of their soundness in the faith: and they do judge those to be sound in the faith, who publicly profess, (acting, to a judgment of charity, *understandingly* and *honestly*,) their assent to the articles of the Christian faith, which they have agreed to, and drawn up to be used in the admission of members: as they are persuaded said articles do express the true sense of the holy Scriptures.

Were they convinced, that any of *their articles* were contrary to Scripture, I know not of one, or to be sure not above one, of all our churches, but would immediately *alter* their articles. For we all profess, that the *bible* is the *only standard* by which our religious sentiments are to be formed; and we mean, by our creeds and confessions, only to express *our sense* of Scripture: not to make a *new bible*; but only to express how we understand *the bible that God has already*

made. And this, to the end that others may know our principles, and we know theirs.

When therefore a number of ministers, and of private gentlemen, who belong to our churches, have in late years appeared so very zealous against *creeds* and *confessions*, as tests of orthodoxy, I was at a loss to know what they meant, and what they designed, and what alteration they would have in our customs and practices, if they could new model things just to their minds. Would they have men admitted into the church, and appointed public instructers, *without any regard to their religious principles?* Or, do they not like it, that our articles *should be writ down?* Or, would they have *new creeds* drawn up, *contrary to our present*, and *imposed* on our churches, and our churches *not allowed to judge for themselves!* Or, what do they mean? And what would they have?

Thus stood the case in my view, when two or three years ago, hearing that something new was about to be published *against creeds* and *confessions*, by a certain ingenious gentleman, I sent the following lines to the printer of the Connecticut Gazette, which he was so good as to give place in his paper, No. 149.

'*To the Printer,*' &c.

'As several pieces of late have been published against creeds and confessions of human composure being used as tests of orthodoxy, which are thought not fully to reach the merits of the cause: it is desired, that in the next piece of that nature the following questions may be answered.

Quest. I. Is it of any importance what men's principles be, if their lives are but good? For if it is not, then not their religious principles, but only their external conduct, need be inquired into; and they may be admitted to sealing ordinances in the church of Christ, or be licensed to preach, and ordained to the work of the ministry, or be employed as presidents, fellows, and tutors, to take care of the education of our youth, whether they are orthodox or not. And so there will be no need of any tests of orthodoxy, human or divine.

'But if it be of importance that they should be sound in the faith, and if their religious principles must be inquired into: then it is inquired,

'*Quest.* II. Whether particular Christian communities, as well as particular persons, have not a right to judge for themselves, what is the true sense of Scripture, and what principles are necessary, according to the holy Scriptures, to be believed and professed, in order to an admission to sealing ordinances, or to be employed as public instructors?

'For if particular communities have not a right to judge for themselves, they ought no longer to claim it. But if they may not judge for themselves, who shall judge for them? Shall all the various sects among protestants go back to the pope to be set right? But, if it be granted that particular communities have a right to judge for themselves, it is inquired,

'*Quest.* III. Why they may not manifest what is their sense of Scripture, in writing, as well as by word of mouth? i. e. why they may not compose a written confession of faith to be used as a test of orthodoxy [k].

'Till a good answer to these questions can be given, it is not to be expected that the use of creeds and confessions should be laid aside. And they are proposed to the public, with a desire they may be answered, with that seriousness and good nature, with which all religious controversies ought to be managed. And such an answer shall be attended to with an honest desire to know the truth, by

'*Decem.* 24, 1757. PAULINUS.'

And now, after above two years, to consider of the matter, you, my good friend *Scripturista,* have been so kind as to give a public answer to my *three questions.* For which, (although you have misunderstood me in a very material point,) I return you my public thanks. And if you speak not only your own sense, but the sense of your whole party, I humbly

k A test is that by which we try something to discover what it is. The bible is the test by which we try doctrines to discover whether they be divine truths. A confession of faith is a test by which we try those who offer to be of our communion, &c. to discover whether they are orthodox, i. e. whether they believe those doctrines which we judge true, and necessary to be professed, in order to be admitted to communion, &c. in this latter sense *only* is it, that the Christian church ever maintained, that confessions of human composure might be used as texts of orthodoxy. See Professor Dunlop, on Creeds and Confessions.

conceive we are not so far apart in this particular controversy, but that it may pretty easily be settled to the satisfaction of all concerned. For if I understand you right, you have granted the whole I designed; and disputed against a point which no denomination of Christians ever maintained. Besure, none in New-England.

I. You not only grant, but contend earnestly for what we all lay down as our first principle, and fundamental maxim, viz. That not creeds, nor confessions, but *the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, are the only rule of faith*; by which we are, each one for ourselves, to be determined what to believe in matters of religion; and to which the final appeal is to be made by all denominations of Christians, and by which they ought to decide all their religious controversies. Our creeds are to express nothing but what we verily believe to be the true sense of Scripture. And if any think we mistake the true sense of Scripture, the dispute is to be decided, not by our creeds, but by the Scripture; comparing Scripture with Scripture. So saith our platform; and this we are fully agreed in. 'The smallest grain of an *inspired testimony*,' says Professor Dunlop, in his piece on creeds and confessions, 'is momentous enough, in a just balance, to weigh down a cart-load of human *canons* and *confessions*.' Edit. 2. p. 78.

II. You grant, 'that some of the principles of religion are so important, that none ought to be admitted to sealing ordinances, or to be employed as public instructers, who do not profess to believe them.' (p. 3.) Yea, you grant, that if they do at first profess to believe them; yet if afterwards it appears they do not, 'ministers ought to be silenced;' (p. 13.) and by parity of reason, church-members censured. You grant this, I say; and therefore, to silence and excommunicate such if they continue obstinate, provided it be done with a Christian temper, is so far from being persecution, that you look upon it a Christian *duty*; according to *Tit.* iii. 10.

And thus far you agree with the church of Christ in all ages of the world.

III. And you also grant fully, just as fully as I would have you, 'that particular Christian communities, as well as particular persons, have a right, not *had a right* once, ten or

twenty years ago, but every day of their lives; 'have a right to judge for themselves, what is the true sense of Scripture; and what principles are necessary, according to the holy Scriptures, to be believed and professed, in order to an admission to sealing ordinances, or to be employed as public instructers.' (p. 4.)

And if they have a right to judge for themselves, you must grant, that it is their duty to *exercise* this right, and not remain in suspense; but come to a judgment; not to be *ever learning, and never come to the knowledge of the truth*, like the condemned by the apostle; 2 Tim. iii. 7. but rather to believe *with all the heart*, and to *continue in the things which they have learned, and been assured of*. Ver. 14.

Yea, how can a Christian church admit any to communion, or settle a minister, until first they are agreed what principles are orthodox and necessary. If they put off coming to a judgment, and agree upon nothing as a rule for themselves to act by, in the admission of members, or settlement of a minister, 'to be of any force till they are dead;' (p. 11.) then they must admit no members, and settle no ministers, till they get into the next world: or else must admit members and settle ministers on this maxim, 'that it is no matter what men's principles be, if their lives are but good.' Which still you will not allow. There is an absolute necessity, therefore, upon your own principles, that Christian communities settle these points, and agree what principles are necessary, even at their first formation.

And surely, a right to judge for themselves does by no means imply, that they must *never come to a judgment;* never be *grounded and settled* in a firm belief of all the great and important doctrines of the Gospel; but always be as unsteady *children, tost to and fro, and carried about* like leaves in autumn, *with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive:* for this is expressly contrary to the word of God. (Col. i. 23. Eph. iv. 14.) And equally contrary to common sense. For a *right to judge for ourselves* is so far from being inconsistent with our *coming to a judgment*, that it can be of no use to us but as it is improved to this end.

But you say, 'we must alter our belief, if afterwards we see just cause for it.' p. 5. 11. 19. True; and so we must give up the bible itself, if we *see just cause for it*. And cease any longer to believe that two and two make four; if we *see just cause for it*. And what then? Must we therefore never come to a judgment about the plainest and most evident matters? Or, do you think that the great truths of the Gospel cannot be clearly determined from the bible? I hope that *believing* the great doctrines of the Gospel *with all the heart*, with *a full assurance of faith*; yea, with *all the riches of the full assurance of understanding*, in the manner true Christians did in the apostolic age, (Acts viii. 37. Col. ii. 2. 1 Thes. i. 5. Heb. x. 22.) does not appear in your eyes like a groundless confidence, a faith built on no solid, rational, lasting evidence. A hope you would not have the minds of Christians always fluctuating and unsettled in their belief, *like a wave of the sea*, and so in consequence hereof, they be *unstable in all their ways*, like those condemned in Jam. i. 6, 7, 8. Nor can I persuade myself, that you think that a firm and persevering belief of Christianity is inconsistent with the impartiality of an honest man, who is a *free inquirer* after truth. And that there is no way to be a strong believer, but by being a great bigot. If indeed you are thus far gone into scepticism, and feel yourself thus at a total loss what to believe, and what to disbelieve; I wonder not you should be for delaying to draw up a creed for yourself, lest you should soon alter your mind, and get into another scheme of religion, a scheme condemned by your former creed. But methinks, to put off 'till after death,' is too long, if you intend to be saved at last by Christianity. But if it is no matter what men's principles be, if their lives are but good; all is well, whether you ever get settled in your principles in this world, or in the world to come.

But why need I thus reason with you? For whatever sound some of your words may seem to have, and however some of your readers may understand you; yet you cannot really mean that Christians, or Christian communities, should delay and put off their being settled, fully settled in the belief of the great doctrines of the Gospel. For you do expressly

grant, that it is of so great importance that men be sound in the faith, that they must not be admitted to communion, or ordained to the work of the ministry, without it. Which supposes that the great truths of the Gospel are so plain and evident, that they may and ought to be known and believed; and Christian communities to be well settled in these things, even at their first foundation.

IV. You grant, 'that particular Christian communities may manifest their sense of Scripture in writing, as well as by word of mouth.' p. 5. i. e. they may compose *creeds*. For a *creed*, (which comes from *credo, to believe*,) consists of a number of articles, which *I believe to be taught in the Holy Scriptures*. And what particular use is to be made of their *creed* by Christian communities, you have already virtually granted, For,

V. Although this clause, 'A written confession of faith to be used as a test of orthodoxy,' does 'really surprise you, (p. 6.) taken in the *frightful sense* you have put upon it; yet, taken in the sense I designed the words, it seems you fully approve the thing. The *name*, 'a test of orthodoxy,' frights you, and no wonder, considering the frightful idea you put to the words. But the thing designed by that name seems quite familiar to your mind. For there are some religious principles which appear to you of so great importance, that you would neither admit to sealing ordinances, nor to the office of a public instructor, those who would not profess them. And these principles you fully believe are taught in the holy Scriptures. So that, in the sense I use words, they are your creed, and your *test of orthodoxy*. For you believe them, and insist upon the profession of them as a *term of communion*. And possibly their evidence appears to you so clear and full, that you are persuaded you never shall, and in fact you never will, alter your belief, as to them. And yet you are no bigot. But rather you profess to stand ready to alter your belief, 'when you see just cause for it.' However, till then you would join to silence, and excommunicate, a minister who should be proved guilty of gross heresy, according to your notions of heresy, i. e. according to your creed, used as *a test of orthodoxy*. (p. 13.)

Yea, it is plain you have no notion of any possible way for you to judge of your neighbour's belief, whether it be what you call orthodox or not, but by comparing it with your creed, i. e. with what you *believe to be the true sense of Scripture.* For, as you say, (p. 20.) 'having settled your principles according to your understanding of Scripture, you do necessarily judge of particular cases according to them, or agreeable to your own judgment of the true meaning of the Scriptures.' Nor indeed, sir, has any body else any other way of judging. For there can be no other. And in fact, all parties, however they differ in their disputes, yet agree to a tittle in their conduct. They all have but one and the same way to judge of their neighbour's orthodoxy, viz. by comparing their neighbour's profession, with what they themselves *believe to be the true meaning of Scripture,* i. e. with their own creed. For we must judge by what we believe to be the true sense of Scripture, or not make the Scripture our rule of judgment, in any respect at all [l].

So that it is plain, that all the great zeal, loud out-cries, and hot disputes against creeds and confessions, being used as a test of orthodoxy, must have arisen from some misunderstanding of the case; or else men have not been honest; but rather disputed against creeds in general, merely because they hate and want to get rid of the established creed of their country. Had it not been for this circumstance, they might have been as great friends to creeds and confessions as any of their neighbours. Now which of these, my friend, is the case with you? Do you hate Calvinism? Do you dispute against creeds, because you disbelieve our confession of faith, and

l The admirers of Dr. Taylor look upon those as orthodox, who understand the Scripture as he has explained it. For they esteem his writings, 'as being a just exposition of the word of God in those doctrines or articles which are contained in them.' Nor would they choose a man to instruct their children in divinity, who did not *judge of truth and error,* as Dr. Taylor does. And why should they condemn that in others, which they approve of in themselves? Or why should they desire to misrepresent it to the world, when at the same time, rightly understood, they and all the world must agree to justify it? Let them confute, if they can, what we mean to maintain. Or if they know they cannot, let them own it; and not try to blacken, by misrepresentations, what they dare not but justify, rightly represented

want to get rid of it? No, you say, the man is 'guilty of scandal who imputes any such corrupt design to you.' (p. 28.) Very well, sir; it remains therefore, that your dislike of creeds, as tests of orthodoxy, must be founded on some mistaken notion of the thing. Which mistaken notion, were it removed, all the dislike of so orthodox, and so honest a man, would immediately cease. And accordingly it is observable, that having in your letter granted the whole I designed, by my *three questions*, to lead gentlemen on your side to feel they must grant; or turn skeptics, on the one hand; or deprive particular Christian communities of their right to judge for themselves, and act according to their own consciences, on the other; I say, having granted the whole I designed, you state a question absolutely of your own making, and set yourself to dispute against a point no denomination of Christians ever professed to maintain. To be sure, it appears to me so very absurd, that instead of its being espoused by almost all Christians since the reign of *Constantine the great*, as you imagine, I very much doubt whether there ever was in any age, so much as one man of tolerable sense that meant to hold it. You indeed insinuate that *a certain gentleman* maintains it. But I dare say you can no sooner get him to believe it, than you can to believe that the same thing *may be*, and *not be*, in the same sense, and at the same time. And it is not fair to put a meaning to a man's words he never intended.

VI. The question you dispute against, is this, 'whether particular Christian communities, having drawn up in writing a confession of faith, agreeable to their present judgment of the true sense of Scripture, have not just right and authority to IMPOSE it on themselves, and all their members, as a test of orthodoxy, and term of communion; and for the future use it as such?' (p. 6.) By the word 'IMPOSE,' you afterwards explain yourself to mean, "they oblige themselves to use it as a test of orthodoxy as long as they live; even although they are in fact afterwards convinced that it is not orthodox." Or, in other words, "they bind themselves to believe, profess, and practise according to it, and not to alter in the least, although 'they see just cause for' alteration. (p. 11—19.

Strange notion! *Bind themselves not to alter their belief, although afterwards 'they see just reason for it!'* But if I do, in fact, *see just reason to alter my belief*, i. e. what appears to me to be just reason, I cannot but alter my belief. It is not in my power to believe a doctrine to be taught in Scripture, while at the same time I am fully convinced it is not taught there. And no man living ever meant to oblige himself to this. Indeed, it would be to oblige himself to an absolute contradiction; to believe a thing to be, and not to be, in the same sense, and at the same time. For, as I before said, 'a creed consists of a number of articles, which *I believe are taught in the sacred Scriptures*. And therefore said articles are not *my creed*, if *I do not believe that they are taught in Scripture*. But to believe they are taught in Scripture, and to believe that they are not taught in Scripture, at the same time, is to believe a thing to be and not to be; which is what you must be sensible, on the least reflection, no man ever meant to do. If the church of Rome is vain enough to believe herself infallible; yet she never was so absurd as professedly to oblige herself to persevere in her belief of her own infallibility, although in time to come she should be fully convinced of her mistake.

'They may not alter their principles,' (you say, p. 11.) 'or at least their profession afterwards, though on further inquiry they should think they had mistaken the sense of Scripture at first;' i. e. they are obliged to proceed to silence a minister, or censure a private christian, as an heretic, directly against the light of their own consciences, when they are fully persuaded they are sound in the faith, the error not being in them, but in their own creeds. To set which notion in all its horrors, you tell a long story of a church trial, carried on upon this scheme, and conclude with saying, 'That if the church have a right to make a contrary judgment, if they see just reason for it,' then tests of orthodoxy must be given up. (p. 19.) So that this is the precise notion of tests of orthodoxy with which you are so terribly frighted, and against which you dispute so zealously, as having in all ages of the church been the grand source of all imposition, tyranny, and persecution. Although at the same time it does not appear that this notion

of a test of orthodoxy, was ever embraced by any Christian church in the world.

Among all the reformed churches, none are more zealous for creeds and confessions, as tests of orthodoxy, than the church of Scotland. And Mr. Dunlop, professor of divinity in the university of of Edinburgh, in his preface to their confession, who wrote to show the justice, reasonableness, and necessity of it, as a PUBLIC STANDARD OF ORTHODOXY, may be supposed to speak the common sense of that church. But he expressly saith, edit. 2. p. 143. 'According to the principles of our confession, every man would search after the truth with the utmost impartiality; attend to the voice of divine revelation, though it may sound very differently in his ears from the public standard of any fallible church. It is base and inglorious, for any person to dissemble the truth when he discovers it, or neglect any proper means of spreading it in the world, because he may thereby disoblige the majority and lose their favours.' Again, p. 147. 'As good men will never subscribe a confession but when persuaded in their consciences of the conformity of its articles to divine revelation; so they will with courage oppose themselves to it; when convinced of their error, they will not be afraid openly to abandon it, and will prove as zealous in promoting what they now see to be the mind of God in the Scripture, as if there had never been such a thing as a human creed in the world.' Thus far this author, celebrated by all the friends of creeds and confessions, as one who has written genteelly and unanswerably. Read him, my good Scripturista, and answer him fairly, and we will all come over to your side. For we all maintain, that we have a right to change our sentiments, 'when we see just reason for it.'

But till then, we ought to persevere in the truth, how much misrepresented soever it is; yea, although dressed up as *absurd* in itself, and the native source of almost all evil.

But since you are so orthodox and so honest a man, and apparently a man of sense, pray let me stand and wonder a little, and in my turn be 'really surprised,' how you ever came to think the *Christian church in all ages* meant to espouse *tests of orthodoxy* in the sense you have charged upon

them. Can you produce any history to prove that this was the case in the primitive times, or in later ages? Does Eusebius say so, or the celebrated Du Pin? Does Sleiden, or Burnet, or Neal, or Bowers, or any other historian of credit? To be sure, so honest a man as you, would not charge so *black* and *absurd* an opinion upon the Christian Church in all ages, out of pure wilful malice, on purpose to bring an odium upon all the friends of *creeds*. And how a man of your good sense could possibly be guilty of so gross a mistake, is very hard to say. To attribute it to wilful malice, I cannot; to attribute it to your ignorance, I do not know how to do it. And on the whole, I am 'really surprised.' You don't pretend to quote but one author, and it is not only plain from his *piece*, but he expressly tells me by word of mouth, that he never meant any such thing: but if he did, how does this prove that the Christian church in all ages have been in this scheme? Or what warrant had you to raise such an evil report against the church of Christ?

As to the questions, you state, p. 6, 7, 8. &c. The answer is short.—'Who have right to make *such* tests of orthodoxy?' No body.—'What principles should be put into *such* tests?' None at all.—'And who should be bound by them?' None in this world, or in the next.

But you have said so much about *imposition*, and *persecution*, (p. 21—28.) that we must stop here a few minutes, lest ignorant people should be *imposed* on. You do not mean to charge your own scheme, my good friend, with being a persecuting scheme. Nor do you think it necessary that our churches should give up their right to judge for themselves, and become indifferent to all principles, as willing to receive an Arminian or Socinian to communion, as an orthodox Christian; and particularly declare that it is no matter what men's principles be, if their lives are but good; and so commence Pagans [m], in order to avoid the dreadful guilt of *impo-*

m The Pagans in the apostolic age exceedingly cried out against the Christian sect, for *damning* all parties but their own. i. e. for preaching as their Master had bid them, *he that believeth not shall be damned.* Mark xvi. 16. Nor all the various tribes of heathen idolaters, with all their different gods, were in full charity with one another: and so they all joined to look upon the Christian sect, as unsocial and inimical to the human kind. See *Warburton's Div. Leg.*

sition and *persecution*. Pray, my good Scripturista, do tell me who acts the manly honest part, and who the part of an *imposer* and *persecutor*?

Aristocles was educated in a Socinian church at Siena. One article of their faith was, that *Jesus Christ is a mere creature, who never had any existence before he was born of the Virgin Mary*. And they professed to understand all those texts of Scripture which speak of his divinity, to imply no more than that he was *God by office*. Aristocles, at the age of sixteen, joined in full communion with the church, and publicly gave his assent to *their creed*. At the age of *twenty-four*, the former minister being dead, Aristocles was chosen his successor, and put into possession of all their parsonage lands for life, on condition he should continue to preach the doctrines embraced by that particular church. Which, not having studied the controversy, he inadvertently engaged to do, being by the influence of education full in the Socinian scheme. However, within two years after his ordination, having carefully searched the Scriptures, Aristocles was fully convinced of his error, and became a sound believer and a good man. And having counted the cost, he came to a full resolution, at the risk of all his outward comforts, honestly to inform his church and congregation of the change of his sentiments; and to preach up the *divinity* and *satisfaction* of Christ, and endeavour to set these points in the clearest light from the holy Scriptures. And at the same time honestly to acknowledge to his people, that he had *broken the covenant*, which in the times of his ignorance he had made with them; and so forfeited all claim to the church's parsonage lands, which accordingly he resigned. 'And now,' says he, 'if you will choose me for your minister, as I am, I am willing to serve you; but I claim no right to IMPOSE a Calvinist minister upon a Socinian church.'—And pray, sir, did not this man act an honest part[n]?

n 'Did I therefore alter my notions as to *articles of faith*, which I had once subscribed, and came to perceive the falsehood of them, I would think myself obliged to follow the dictates of my own conscience, and would endeavour also by all due means to persuade the church to which I belonged to change their *faith* also. But if I were not able, it would be extremely foolish to fancy that they would act directly contrary to their own principles, in continuing me their minister, and endowing me

Authades, in another part of the Christian world, where Calvinism was the only established religion, in his youth, joined with the church where he lived; and publicly gave his assent, according to custom, to the articles of the Christian faith, as contained in their formula, which were strictly Calvinistical, although the church was grown very lax in examinations, without which, formulas, though never so good, will not answer the end. He did not believe their articles at the time, but it was for his credit to be a church-member; therefore he kept his infidelity to himself, and made a public profession. At length the minister, a good old Calvinist, died. The church and congregation invited Authades to be his successor. All the time he was on probation, his chief study was to conceal himself. For by this time, he began to be full in the Socinian scheme. He generally preached on moral subjects, as these gave him the largest scope for popular declamation, and the best advantages to hide his principles. If at any time he preached on *original sin, regeneration, justification, the satisfaction of Christ, or the influences of the Holy Spirit*, as he was obliged sometimes to do, to prevent their suspicions, he took the greatest care to express himself so, as that his secret sentiments should not be discovered by the people. However, some of the more judicious sort suspected him, and feared he meant to act a part. Nevertheless, a great majority invite him to settle, and he is ordained. He expressly covenants to preach to them according to their Calvinistic articles of faith; and on this condition, they engage to pay him 100*l.* per annum. He knew they would not settle him, if he did not delude them. And he still knows he cannot keep possession of the 100*l.* per annum, unless he can keep them deluded. Therefore he uses all his art to conceal himself from the congregation in general; and in the mean time, is usually cunning to make proselytes to the Socinian scheme, in a secret under-handed way. At length, having made a par-

with that salary, which they had allotted to a *pastor* that should teach them doctrines which I had found myself obliged to abandon. It were absured to imagine that though *those who serve the altar should like the altar*, that yet I should live by an *altar* which I had abandoned, and set up one in opposition to, and indeed endeavoured to overthrow.' *Eells* on *Creeds*. p. 91.

ty he begins to take courage; and slily dresses up Calvinists as *bigots*, and *vital piety* as *enthusiasm*; and more openly declaims against *creeds* and *confessions*, as *impositions* and *engines of persecution*, the result of a *proud* and *domineering spirit*; and in a word, *the fatal source of all mischief*. For so they feel to him. For as *he that doth evil hateth the light*; so he that is an heretic hates orthodox creeds and confessions. Poor Authades! he knows very well, that if his church and congregation would strip off his false colours, and get legal proof of his true character, he must lose his 100*l.* per annum. He thinks it no roguery for him to impose upon his church, and cheat them out of their money, and out of their principles; but he thinks it would be a piece of the greatest tyranny, and the most cruel and barbarous persecution, if they should find him out, and prove him to be a Socinian, and, as such, have him silenced, and take away his 100*l.* per annum. Thus every man lives, and thus he dies; and to be sure, you will, candid Scripturista, join with me to look upon and abhor him, as a thorough practised knave.

For you grant, the Calvinistic church had 'a right to judge for themselves, what was the true sense of Scripture, and what principles were necessary according to the holy Scriptures, to be believed and professed, in order to be admitted to sealing ordinances, or to be employed as a public instructor.' And if they had a right to do so, their doing so was an *imposition* upon Authades; but Authades was the only man worthy of *imposition*. He *imposed* upon the church when he joined with it at first; he still in a higher degree imposed upon the church and congregation too, when he settled in the work of the ministry among them. He wanted their money. He obtained it first by dissimulation, and kept it through his whole life by one series of deceit.

And if Calvinistic churches in the Christian world, in this corrupt age, have reason to fear that there are too many of Authades' character, the very *wolves in sheep's clothing* our Saviour warned us to *beware of*, (*Mat.* vii. 15.) can you desire, that instead of obeying the divine counsel, they should tamely resign their 'right to judge for themselves,' and admit to sealing ordinances and to the work of the ministry, any that

offer, without any regard to their principles? And to suffer themselves to be imposed upon in the highest degree, to the great injury of themselves, and of their posterity, only to avoid the bitter resentments of such men as Authades, who will cry out, *Imposition! imposition! Persecution! persecution!* if you only insist on your right, as Christians, to know the articles of their belief, and refuse to admit them to communion and into the ministry, unless they appear to be sound in the faith? No, sir, you can, consistent with your own avowed principles, desire no such thing. But rather, as Christ has made it the indispensable duty of all his followers, openly to profess the doctrines of his holy religion, (Mat. x. 22. 32, 33.) charged them to *beware of false prophets*, (Mat. vii. 15.) and commended them for trying and detecting false pretenders, (Rev. ii. 2.) and as even common sense teaches, that the disciples of Christ have a natural right to know, and judge of the religious sentiments of those who claim to be their *fellow-disciples*, and expect to be treated as such; so instead of discountenancing the little concern of Calvinistic churches in the present day, to be consistent with yourself, you, who cannot bear to be thought not a Calvinist, ought rather to blame their too great indifference, and call upon them to awake, stand upon their guard, and watch, lest cunning deceitful men slily creep in, and before we are aware, bring *another gospel* into our pulpits, and the utmost confusion and discord into our churches. For how can we *walk together except we be agreed?* (*Amos* iii. 3.) Or keep the *unity of the spirit in the bond of peace*, except we have *one faith, one Lord, one baptism?* (*Eph.* iv. 3, 4, 5.)

But perhaps you will say, 'The Calvinists are too suspicious already. There are no Arminians, no Arians, no Socinians, &c. among us. The cry is raised by designing men, merely to answer political ends.' Oh, my good Scripturista! O, that this were indeed the case! O, that our fears were quite groundless! How soon would I believe it, if you could help me to 'see just reason for it.' But how would the party through New-England, laugh at our credulity in Connecticut, if their friends among us could make us believe all to be safe till they could carry their points here, as they have elsewhere.

In New-Hampshire province, this party have actually, three years ago, got things so ripe, that they have ventured to new-model our *shorter catechism*; to alter, or entirely leave out, the *doctrines of the Trinity*, of the *decrees* of *our first parents being created holy*, of *original sin*, Christ *satisfying divine justice*, *effectual calling*, *justification*, *adoption*, *sanctification*, *assurance of God's love*, *perseverance in grace*, &c. and to adjust the whole to Dr. Taylor's scheme. And in their preface to this new catechism, they tell the world, that 'The snarling of party bigots will be little regarded.' i. e. if all the Calvinists in the country are disobliged, to see their whole scheme given up, *they do not care*. They look upon us all, as *snarling bigots*, not to be regarded. This is honest: now they speak their hearts; and tell the world how they feel! Come from New-Hampshire along to Boston, and see there a celebrated D. D. the head of a large party! He boldly ridicules the doctrine of the trinity, and denies the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*, in the sight of all the country, in his book of sermons: come nearer home, come to Willingford; see there a young gentleman, bold to settle in the ministry, although opposed as an heretic by near half the town. Observe, and see how he conducts. How backward to let his people know his religious sentiments, while on probation! How resolved, never to be examined by the *consociation*, let it cost what it would, though charged with heresy, and cited to appear before them! Yea, although his opposers offer to accept him for their minister, if upon examination he should appear to be sound in the faith! And yet under these, even under these circumstances, he could find ministers to ordain him!

And how does this young gentleman conduct since his ordination? Does he convince the town that he is a sound Calvinist; as he might easily do, if he were? No, far from it. Yea, notwithstanding his opposers, (who, before his ordination, had offered to receive him for their minister, if upon examination by their consociation, he should be approved as sound in the faith,) now since his ordination renew the same offer: yea, are willing to leave it to another consociation, (viz. Hartford south,) then convened at Wallingford; and if they approve him, declare they will accept him for their minister:

yet Mr. Dana, refuses to do it! He had rather run the venture of all consequences, than to be examined by them! The town may break, himself be deposed, and non-communion be declared against him and his party: but let it cost what it will, he is resolved he will not be examined by them! But why? He knew the consociation *must* approve him as orthodox, if he appeared to believe our Confession of Faith. And thus the whole controversy might have been settled in an hour or two; which now is not likely to be settled these many years. And he knew it was no matter whether the consociation had jurisdiction or not, if both he and his opposers would agree to submit the affair to them. But he was resolved not to do it: and why all this, if he was a sound believer, I cannot conceive [o].

Nor is this all: for he has, since these things, even introduced *a new method of taking persons into full communion with the church.* A method, which, however suited to the *latitudinarian* scheme, yet is entirely subversive of the very foundation on which all our churches in New-England were originally settled. To be sure it appears so to me; and because I would fain know your opinion of it, I will relate the case, and state *three questions* for you to answer, in your next letter to your friend Paulinus. The case is this; the first church in Wallingford, under the Rev. Mr. Street, their first minister, were formed a Calvinistic church. The *doctrines of faith* which they drew up, to be used in the admission of members, were strictly Calvinistic. This form has been used, in that church ever since, in the admission of members. Their former ministers, having publicly read it before all the congregation, used to say to the persons to be admitted, *these articles of the Christian faith you give your assent unto.* Instead of which, Mr. Dana, their present minister, (if he may be so called after deposition,) says, "These articles of the Christian faith you give your assent unto, so far as you think them agreeable to the word of God." My *three questions* are these.

Quest. I. Does Mr. Dana, or his church, by such a profession as above, know what principles persons pretend to be of, whom they thus admit to special ordinances? Can they,

[o] For the facts above, the reader is referred to Mr. Eell's Remarks, &c.

by such a profession, know, whether they mean to be Papists, or Protestants, Socinians, Arians, Pelagians, Arminians or Antinomians? If they can, pray tell me how? For all these different denominations *believe*, and may *profess to believe*, these Calvinistic articles of faith, *so far as they think them to be agreeable to the word of God.*

But if by this profession you grant Mr. Dana, and his church, cannot form any proper judgment of the principles of those who are thus admitted, whether they are Papists, or Protestants, Socinians, Arians, &c. I would inquire,

Quest. II. Are Papists, Socinians, Arians, &c. all of them orthodox enough to be admited to sealing ordinances? If not—

Quest. III. How can Mr. Dana's conduct, in this affair, be vindicated, who receives members upon a profession, which any heretic in the Christian world can make, and still retain all his errors?

Will it do to say, in his excuse, 'That some of his church are attached to the Calvinistic scheme in which they have been educated; and will be offended if he lays aside their *old doctrines of faith,* and makes a *new creed* of a different stamp: and perhaps they may leave him, and join with those who have already rejected him. If he should discover his peculiar principles so plainly, perhaps he would soon have but few hearers. And so this will not do. "And it is right to dissemble a little in so good a cause." And besides, if he himself does not believe *their doctrines of faith,* it is a hardship, to oblige him to lead his people, from time to time, to profess, in the most public and solemn manner, their belief of them; and to keep back such from special ordinances, who scruple to make such a profession. To prevent all which difficulties, he first reads over *their old doctrines of faith,* for a *blind* to the Calvinist part of his church; and then he expresses himself so, as to leave those whom he admits, at full liberty to believe what they please, and yet be quite orthodox enough at the same time to be admitted into the church of Christ, as his true and faithful followers.' But if this be the case, does not one of our *former questions* need to be reconsidered, viz. 'Is it of any importance what men's princi-

ples be, if their lives are but good?' For if indeed *it is of no importance*, and if *pious frauds* are justifiable; then we may all do as Mr. Dana does. But if *it is of importance*, and if we must not dissemble, how can his conduct be justified? Or, how can any orthodox church in New-England safely receive members, by virtue of a recommendation from his church, as being sound in the faith, when it is not known what their faith is?

A speedy and full answer to these questions will greatly oblige,

Sir, your already very much obliged,
and very humble servant,

PAULINUS.

THE

HALF-WAY COVENANT:

A

DIALOGUE.

And look that thou make them after their Pattern, which was shewed thee in the Mount. JEHOVAH.

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: And, lo, I am with you. JESUS CHRIST.

A

DIALOGUE,

BETWEEN A MINISTER AND HIS PARISHIONER,

CONCERNING THE

HALF-WAY COVENANT.

PARISHIONER. SIR, I am dissatisfied with a part of your public conduct, and am come to open my mind freely to you, if you will be so kind as to allow me an opportunity.

MINISTER. Sir, I am now at leisure, and at your service, and your honest frankness gives me pleasure. Between you and me alone, to let me know the objections you have against any part of my conduct, is to act a friendly part. It is more kind and christian-like, than to keep your thoughts to yourself, to engender a secret disaffection in your heart. And you may be quite assured, that not only now, but in all future times, I shall with pleasure listen to any objections against my public administrations proposed in a friendly, candid manner; and will be ready to be set right, wherein I am wrong; or to let you know the reasons of my conduct. For, next to the light of God's countenance, and the approbation of my own conscience, I prize the good opinion of my fellow-men: and particularly, I greatly prize the testimony of the consciences of my own people in my behalf. To your conscience, therefore, I am now willing to approve myself.—Open your mind without the least reserve.

PAR. I have lately moved into the parish; I had owned the covenant in the town I came from; my other children have been baptised; we have now another child for baptism, and I hear you refuse to baptise the children of any but those who are in full communion. This gives me pain.

MIN. I cannot give you pain, without feeling pain myself. But you would not desire that I should go counter to the will of my LORD and MASTER, while acting in his name, as his minister; nor would this be a likely means to obtain a blessing for your child. And if I am warranted by the Gospel of Christ to baptise your child, you are very sensible my reputation, and every worldly interest, will join to prompt me to it. You will easily make a convert of me to your opinion, if you can point out one text of Scripture to justify that common practice.

P. I have not studied the point. I cannot mention any texts of Scripture; but it is the custom where I was born and brought up; and I knew not but that it was the custom every where, until I moved into this parish.

M. No, Sir, it is not the custom every where; it was not the custom where I was born and brought up; and there are many churches in the country that are not in the practice.—At the first settling of New-England, there was, so far as I know, not one church that allowed baptism to the children of any but those whose parents were one or both in full communion. About 40 years after the first church was formed, this custom was brought in by a synod that met at Boston, 1662. Many ministers and churches zealously opposed it at the time, and even to this day the custom is not become universal: and of late a considerable number of churches, who had adopted the practice have laid it aside. It is not practised at all in the church of Scotland, as I have been informed by a rev. gentleman of an established reputation, who has lately been invited, and who has removed from thence, to the Presidency of New-Jersey College. And it is certain the confession of faith, catechisms, and directory of the church of Scotland, make no mention of it: neither is the practice mentioned in the Saybrook platform, which has been generally received by the churches in Connecticut; for the council which met at Saybrook, did not see cause to adopt that practice, although it had been introduced by the synod at Boston.—But if you had not studied the point before you owned the covenant; and if you took it for granted, that it was right, merely from education; yet you are able to let me know in

what views, and from what views, and from what motives you owned the covenant: as I suppose you meant to act conscientiously.

P. It was the common opinion that none ought to join in full communion, and come to the Lord's table, but those that were godly, that had on a *wedding garment, lest coming unworthily, they eat and drink damnation to themselves*. But it was thought that graceless persons might own the covenant, and have their children baptised; and this was my opinion, and I acted on these principles.

M. Yes, Sir, and I suppose the generality of people in the country that own the covenant, in these times, act on these principles. But it was not so from the beginning. The synod in 1662, who first brought in the practice, were not in this scheme. It was known and owned, and publicly declared on all hands, in the time of it, "That the synod did acknowledge, that there ought to be true saving faith in the parent, according to the judgment of rational charity, or else the child ought not to be baptised [p].

P. But, Sir, I am surprised! Is this true? Was this really the opinion of those who first brought in this practice?

M. It is true, it was indeed their opinion, if we may give credit to their own declarations. No man who was for this practice, perhaps, was of more note than the Rev. Dr. Increase Mather, of Boston, who was a member of the synod, and afterwards wrote in defence of this practice; and no author can in more express language declare his sentiments. These are his own words, in a pamphlet, entitled, "A Discourse concerning the subject of Baptism, wherein the present controversies that are agitated in the New-England Churches, are from Scripture and reason modestly inquired into." p. 52, 53. "In the fifth place, it may be alleged, that the persons in question, either have to the judgment of charity, a justifying faith, or not. If not, they, and consequently their children, are not baptisable. If they have, then they are forthwith admissible to the Lord's supper. Answer.

[p] See A Defence of the Answer and Arguments of the Synod, &c. against the reply made by the Rev. Mr. John Davenport, Pastor of the Church at New-Haven. Preface, p. 23, 24.

"I. I do readily acknowledge, that as it is only a justifying faith which giveth right to baptism before God; so it is the profession or visibility of this faith, that giveth right thereunto before the church. Some have maintained that a *dogmatical historical* faith, or a faith of assent to the truth of the Gospel doth entitle to baptism. But the common protestant doctrine against the papists speaketh otherwise.—Though a man should believe all that the holy Scriptures say concerning God and Christ, yet, if he doth not consent with his heart, that this God shall be *his God*, and this Christ *his Saviour*, he hath not right to baptism in the sight of God; or if he doth not profess such a *consent*, (which is implied in the proposition before us, when it is said concerning the persons in question, that they *gave up themselves to the Lord*,) he cannot justly claim baptism. In most churches in the world, men own the creed, (called the apostles',) before baptism. Now therein they say, I believe in God, and not only I believe God, viz. with a faith of assent only in the understanding. Now to believe in God, implieth a *consent of the will*, choosing this God for my God. And considering that in baptism, there is a profession of repentance for past transgressions, and an engagement to walk in newness of life for time to come, (Mark i. 4. 2 Pet. i. 9.) and that it cometh in the room of circumcision, which was a seal of the righteousness of faith; (Rom. iv. 11.) and that thereby remission of sins is sealed. (Acts ii. 38.) Which remission is not promised to any faith but justifying; also that baptism is said to save. (1 Pet. iii. 21.) And they that are baptised are said to be in Christ. (Gal. iii. 27.) And to have communion with Christ in respect of his death and resurrection. (Rom. vi. 4, 5. Col. ii. 12.) I say, from these and many the like considerations, I am fully persuaded that it is not a mere historical, but justifying faith, which giveth right to baptism."

These are his words, and they are as plain and express as could be desired.

P. But if this was in fact the case, I cannot conceive what room there was for the half-way covenant! for such persons might consistently profess to comply with the whole covenant, and not stop half-way in practice, but come up to all ordinances.

M. You are right in this observation. Persons so qualified, who have been brought up under the light of the Gospel from their infancy, by pious parents, and godly ministers, and now adult, and become godly themselves, professing and practising accordingly, are, in a judgment of rational charity, as fit for the Lord's table, as to offer their children in baptism. Nor is it merely a privilege they may claim, to come to the Lord's supper along with their Christian brethren, and join with them in commemorating the death of Christ; but it is their indispensable duty. They are bound to do it by the express command of Christ. Luke xxii. 19. *This do in remembrance of me.* And to neglect it, is practically to renounce the authority of Jesus Christ. And is it right for ministers to teach the disciples of Christ to live in the breach of the least of his commands?

P. But what would Dr. Mather say to this?

M. You may hear, for these are his words: (p. 54.) "It will not follow that these persons are immediately to be admitted to the Lord's table, or to the privileges of full communion. For *more full and satisfactory evidences* of regeneration and of Christian proficiency, are requisite in order to admission to the Lord's table, than in order to baptism." And if you will read *Mather's Magnalia*, you will see that they insisted on *initial grace* in order to baptism, but supposed greater attainments necessary in order to the LORD'S supper. But if that command of Christ is binding on weak Christians, who are indeed real Christians: Luke xxii. 19. to say they are not to be admitted to the Lord's table, is to say, it is not lawful they should obey the command of Christ. So this half-way covenant, while it teaches for doctrine the commandment of men, sets aside the command of Christ.

P. I am in the same opinion; nor can I see any room for the half-way covenant on Mather's scheme. But I have heard that Stoddard's scheme favours the present practice.

M. This is a mistake. Mr. Stoddard of Northampton, never practised the half-way. i. e. he never admitted any to have baptism for their children, but those who were in full communion; and he expressly declares, that those who have been baptised in infancy, and owned their covenant, are oblig-

ed in duty to come to the LORD's table. Yea, he says, (Appeal, p. 30. edit. 2.) "It is a scandal if they do not, and the church may call them to an account for their neglect. It is a visible contempt cast upon the ordinance." He held the Lord's supper to be a converting ordinance. And that unconverted men, knowing themselves to be such, might lawfully come. And that it was as lawful to come to the Lord's supper as to baptism, p. 77.; so that there was no room for any half-way covenant or half-way practice, on his scheme. For unconverted men, knowing themselves to be such, may on his scheme come not only half-way, but to all ordinances, and to one as well as to another.

P. I never heard of these things till now, and I know not what to think or what to say. It seems as if the half-way covenant, and the half-way practice, could not be made consistent on any scheme.

M. If the covenant owned is the covenant of grace, and if the parent acts understandingly and honestly in the affair, he is a good man, he has a right before God to baptism for his children, and an equal right to the LORD's supper; yea, that command of CHRIST, in Luke xxii. 19. renders it his indispensable duty to attend the Lord's supper [q]. But if the covenant owned is not the covenant of grace, those who have owned it, have in the sight of GOD no right to either of those ordinances, which are seals of that covenant, and of no other: no more right than if they had given their assent to any chapter in the apocrypha. Did you never hear it observed and talked of, that those who own the covenant, make as full and large a profession as they who join in full communion?

P. Yes. And my former minister read the same covenant to such as owned the covenant, as he did to those that joined in full communion, word for word, only one did not promise

q Under the Jewish dispensation it was lawful for an Israelite, not hindered by any external impediment, voluntarily to absent himself from the passover, if he was ceremonially unclean. But under the Gospel, an Israelite indeed, of sufficient age and understanding, and not hindered by any natural impediment, may not voluntarily absent himself from the Lord's supper, unless disqualified by spiritual uncleanness, by his own personal wickedness unrepented of, or for which he has not made Gospel satisfaction. And such an one is equally unfit to offer his child in baptism. Num. ix. 13. Mat. v. 23, 24.

to come up to all ordinances, and the other did. And I must confess this sometimes stumbled me.

M. If you please, sir, I will repeat the covenant we use when any join in full communion, the same that was read to me by my minister, when I joined to the church about three and thirty years ago. A brief summary of it is this: "You do now in the presence of the dread Majesty of heaven and earth, and before angels and men, in the sincerity of your soul, avouch the Lord Jehovah to be your sovereign Lord and supreme Good, through Jesus Christ; and solemnly devote and give up yourself to his fear and service, to walk in all his ways, and keep all his commands, seeking his glory," &c. And is this more full and express than your former minister used when persons owned the covenant?

P. I think not; it is very much like it.

M. So far as I am acquainted, the forms in use all over the country, a very few instances excepted, are very much alike. The only difference of any consequence lies in practice: I think it my duty, in private as well as public, to explain the covenant, and to see to it, that persons understand it before they make it, and know what they are about to do, and are sufficiently instructed that it is a wicked thing to *lie to God with their mouths, and flatter him with their lips.*

P. Very well, sir, no doubt this is a minister's duty. But, alas! for me, I never knew what I was about, nor considered the import of the words I publicly gave my consent unto. I knew myself to be unconverted. I meant to own the covenant, as the phrase is, and have my children baptised; but I had no design to profess godliness, or to pretend a real compliance with the covenant of grace. This godly people may do: but it had been great hypocrisy in me to do it. To lie to men is bad, but to lie to God is worse. I supposed that owning the covenant, was what the unconverted might do.

M. How can a man that knows himself to be unconverted, dead in sin, and destitute of the grace of God, stand up before the whole congregation, and say, "I do now in the presence of the dread Majesty of heaven and earth, and before angels and men, avouch the Lord Jehovah to be my sovereign

Lord and supreme good, through Jesus Christ, and solemnly devote and give up myself to his fear and service, to walk in all his ways, and keep all his commands, seeking his glory?"

P. I freely own I knew not what I did, when I owned the covenant. But you hinted just now, that this is not the custom in all the churches where the half-way practice takes place.

M. I have heard of a few churches where the ministers have of late drawn up a new form for those who own the covenant, essentially different from that which is used when any one is admitted to full-communion; which new form designedly leaves out the covenant of grace, and contains a profession, which unconverted men may make, and yet speak true. And this, with greater propriety, may be called the half-way covenant, although indeed it does not go half-way, and gives no right to those ordinances which are seals of the covenant of grace. Besides, God never did propose any covenant to mankind but which required real holiness on man's part; and any covenant short of this is a mere human device. It is teaching for doctrine the commandment of men, directly contrary to the express orders of Jesus Christ to his apostles, and all their successors. Mat. xxviii. 20. *Teaching them to observe whatsoever I command you.* The covenant with Adam required perfect holiness, without any provision for pardon in case of transgression. The covenant at Sinai written on the two tables of stone, called *the tables of the covenant*, containing ten commands, according to our Saviour's interpretation, required them *to love God with all their heart, and their neighbour as themselves*, in which the sum of all virtue consists; (Mat. xxii. 37—40,) but, however, it made provision for pardon to the true penitent, through shedding of blood, but not for impenitent sinners. Lev. xxvi. 1 Kings viii. And it is acknowledged on all hands, Antinomians excepted, that repentance toward God, and faith toward Christ are required in the covenant of grace, as revealed in the Gospel. These ungracious covenants, therefore, are not from heaven, but of men.

P. My conscience is convinced. I am obliged to give up the half-way covenant; but it is with no small reluctance: for what will become of my child? must it remain unbaptised? I cannot bear the thought. What shall I do?

M. Is it lawful for a minister of Christ to baptise any one without a divine warrant?

P. No.

M. Is baptism, administered without a divine warrant, a likely means to do a child any good?

P. No. But where is your commission to baptise? and what is the tenour of it?

M. In Mark. xvi. 15, 16. *Go preach the Gospel to every creature.* Thus unlimited is the commission to preach the Gospel. *And he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved.* The faith which entitles to baptism is a saving faith. Accordingly, when the multitude were pricked at the heart, on the day of pentecost, Peter did not say, *own the covenant*; nor did he say, *join in full communion*; but *repent* first of all, and then *be baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus for the remission of sins.* Acts ii. 38. And with the same sacred regard to the divine commission, Philip said to the eunuch, *if thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest.* Acts viii. 37. And it is a settled point on all hands, that if parents have no right to baptism for themselves, their children can have no right on their account.

P. Is it lawful for me to join in full communion, when I know I have no grace? can I answer it to God?

M. You remember when the King came in to view the guests, he saw a man among them *not having on a wedding garment*, to whom he said, *friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment? and he was speechless.* To make a false and lying profession is inexcusable wickedness. It is true, there will be tares along with the wheat, but it is the devil sows them there, and not the servants. And if false brethren come into the church, they creep in unawares; they have no right to be there.

P. But does not my own baptism render me a church member, and entitle my child to baptism, although I am destitute of faith and repentance?

M. "Circumcision verily profiteth if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. For he is not a Jew that is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh." Rom. ii. 25. 28. One baptised in infancy, who in the sight of God practically renounces his baptism when adult, as all do who reject Christ and continue impenitent, is not considered by God as entitled to the blessings of the new covenant, but as under the curse of the law. "He that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him." John iii. 19. 36. And what right hath this man to the seals of the covenant of grace, in the sight of God, who is by Christ himself declared to be under condemnation and wrath?

P. Well, if I have no right to baptism for my poor child, I must be silent. But I wish it might be baptised.

M. Will you allow me to examine the earnest desire of baptism which you express?

P. I ought to be willing. I ought to know the motives that influence me: for God knows them, whether I do or not.

M. I am glad to see your mind so serious and candid. If this temper should continue, I should hope all your doubts would be removed. For I can tell you seriously, I am willing to baptise your child, provided you do understandingly and with all your heart desire it.

P. And do I not? I should be a cruel parent if I did not.

M. Baptism, you know, is administered *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* In baptism, therefore, you dedicate your child to God the Father, through Jesus Christ his Son, to be sanctified by the Holy Ghost; and so give up your child with all your heart to the Lord for ever to be educated for God, and to be for him, and for him alone, in time and to eternity. And do you love God to that degree, as thus to give him your child for ever? if so, why do not you give yourself to God, first of all? you love your child, but you love yourself better. First of all then cease to be cruel to your own soul; no longer practically renounce your own baptism, by turning your back on God and the Redeemer; but act up to its genuine import; give yourself to God,

through Jesus Christ his Son, that you may become the temple of the Holy Ghost; and thus ratify what your parents did for you, when they dedicated you to God in baptism.—This is that owning of the baptismal covenant which God requires at your hands. Then bring your dear child, and consecrate it to God in sincerity and truth. This is the way, the right way for a blessing. But if, instead of this, you are moved only by custom, by a sense of worldly honour, by pride and shame; and desire that holy ordinance to be administered to your child from unholy motives, as Simon Magus desired the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost to answer his carnal ends; God knows it, and all the world will know it at the day of judgment. Pray, how was it when your other children were baptised? and how is it in general to all appearance when people own the covenant and get their children baptised? are they brought up for God; or only to serve divers lusts and pleasures? Look through the country wherever you are acquainted; the youth learn to dress, to sing, to dance; but do their parents appear to understand that they have devoted them to God? and is this evidently their great concern to bring them up for God? But to leave others, and to attend only to your own heart; can it be true, that you have a heart to give your child to God, and yet not a heart to give yourself to him? think of it, my dear sir.

P. I must grant that it is absurd and inconsistent, for a parent to pretend to have a heart to give his child to God, and yet have no heart to give himself to him. But I do desire to give myself to God.

M. Pray, sir, what then hinders you from giving yourself to him? you may desire to escape everlasting misery, you may desire to be happy for ever, so Balaam did; self-love may excite to this, where there is no love to God in the heart: but if you love God so as to be willing to have him for your portion; if you love Christ so as to be willing to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow him; you may have your choice: you may do as you like: "come, for all things are now ready." And if you would now in fact make this choice, it would put an end to your present difficulties about your child. Nothing, therefore, can hinder the baptism of your

child, but your continuing to reject God and the Redeemer, by which you practically renounce your own baptism, and forfeit all the blessings of the covenant.

P. Shocking affair! my child unbaptised! none to blame but its own parents! what shall I do?

M. Is not God your Creator? are you not his by an original, absolute, entire right? is he not infinitely worthy of your supreme love? were you not in your infancy dedicated to him in baptism? and have you turned your back upon him to this very hour; and practically renounced your baptism in his sight? so that, dying in this state, your baptism will be of no advantage to you; you will perish among the uncircumcised, among the unbaptised, among pagans; as it is written, *he that believeth not shall be damned*, and *except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish!* and do you now inquire, what you shall do? ah, my dear sir! the answer is plain. *Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.* And thus at last comply with the import of your baptism, and become a disciple of Christ. "And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. But unto the wicked, God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes? or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" Psal. l. 16. Pray accept kindly this advice from one who is your friend, and who is bound by office to act an honest part with the souls committed to his charge.

P. I thank you, sir, for your fidelity, and ask your prayers: for the present, adieu!

M. I thank you for your kind visit. I ask the favour of another hour, when you are at leisure. I am always at your service; and might I be a means of your salvation, it would give me joy, while I live, and after I am dead, through eternal ages. I only add, if you will read what the late learned pious President Edwards wrote on the qualifications for Christian communion, printed at Boston; and the Rev. Mr. Green's pieces on the same subject, printed at New-York; you may in them see the truth confirmed, and objections answered more largely. And if after all you should desire further conversation on this subject, I will be ready to attend

whenever you will be so kind as to call upon me. Only come at all times, as you have at this, in a serious, friendly, candid spirit; remembering this is one of the most interesting, solemn, and important subjects. Adieu, my dear sir.

DIALOGUE II.

Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. PAUL.

Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. JESUS CHRIST.

PARISHIONER. REVEREND SIR, as you asked the favour of another hour, when I should be at leisure, I am now come to pay you a second visit, to let you know my sentiments plainly, and hope you will treat me with all the calmness and kindness you professed before.

MINISTER. I am ready to hear every thing you have to say.

P. I freely confess you made me say, and consent to every thing you chose I should say: and now I choose to turn the tables. And if you will be as condescending to me as I was to you, I doubt not but I shall easily gain my point.

M. I mean to be condescending.

P. You intimate there is no text of Scripture to justify the practice of those having children baptised, who do not come to the Lord's supper. Allow there is none, it does not in the least prove the point. I will as easily be a proselyte to your opinion, if you will point me a text of Scripture which saith that all who were baptised, or had their children baptised, came to the Lord's supper.

M. There are many things may be gathered from Revelation, which are not expressed in terms.

P. Very true; and I think equally on my side of the question as on yours. I remember you intimated before, that it was not the custom any where at the first settling this country, to baptise the children of any, only those who come to the Lord's table; and that it is not to this day the practice

of the church of Scotland; which I find is a mistake, as I am informed, upon good authority, that the church of Scotland ever did, and do to this day, baptise for those who do not come to the table. And am well knowing to the practice of the Presbyteries in this country, that they actually do baptise, for those who do not come to the table of the Lord.

M. Allow this to be so, it does not prove there is any half-way covenant.

P. It is readily allowed, and I believe generally, if not universally agreed, that there is no half-way covenant; Doctor Mather never supposed an half-way covenant. And I freely allow it is the duty of all to come to the Lord's table, whom the church will accept. But to oblige persons to that which we cannot convince them they may safely do, seems hard, and contrary, to that Christian spirit which the Gospel urgeth. Rom. xv. 1. We then that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak. Gal. vi. 2. Bear ye one another's burdens.

M. The Gospel every where urgeth condescension. But persons who in a judgment of charity are pious, are obliged by the express command of Christ. Luke xxii. 19. *This do in remembrance of me.*

P. I cannot believe the command of Christ obligeth any of his followers to do that which they in their consciences dare not attempt, under their then present circumstances. I believe it is their duty to come, but I believe they must first get their scruples removed; and I believe the church must allow them that privilege, which if they will not, in order to be consistent with themselves, they must proceed to excommunication; and I cannot see why the church must not proceed further, and excommunicate all baptised persons who neglect to come to the Lord's table; for they are all visible members of the church. A sad consequence, if it cannot be prevented.

M. To drive the point, will undoubtedly make sad work; but it will not do to tell persons they will be accepted of God, if they be not gracious; neither will it do for us to lead them to make a lying profession: nothing short of a gracious profession will give a person a right to the ordinances of the Gospel.

P. Sir, I allow what you say in part, and I do not know that any one pretends to the contrary; all are agreed in it, that no person ever can be accepted of God, and be finally happy, short of real holiness; but whoever thought, (unless it be some wild enthusiast,) that a person might not be exhorted to attempt to do his duty, unless he could do it perfectly? It seems the sentiments you advance amount to the same absurdity lately taught by a foreigner, that none but those who are gracious are to be urged to do any duty. And with regard to a lying profession, it seems your sentiments lead persons to it. For, according to you, those who make profession of real piety, have a right to the ordinance of God; and those whom the church receive on this foot, are really in covenant. So it is not grace which gives the right, but a profession: then if that profession is a false one, and the person who makes it is an hypocrite, a false profession, even a lie, brings a person really into covenant with God, and gives him a right to his ordinances. If I understand you, there cannot be any profession, only a lying one, unless persons are gracious. So a lying profession does bring persons visibly into covenant with God, or none are visibly in covenant with God, only those who are gracious. This I think is contrary to the divine declaration, and to all the divine conduct towards his covenant people. God allowed them to enter into covenant: God treated them as being in covenant: and declared they were in covenant, and accordingly had compassion on them, offered them special privileges and glorious means, that they might be trained up for his heavenly kingdom.

M. There seem to be some difficulties which I had not thought of; but is it not the covenant of grace which is to be owned?

P. Doubtless it is; no one dare deny it. Neither need they be led to give their assent to any chapter in the Apocrypha. No one disputes its being the covenant of grace; but by attending upon God's ordinances, they mean to confirm their belief of the truth of the covenant of grace, laying themselves under more solemn obligations to perform every duty.

M. I think it my duty in private, as well as in public, to explain the covenant, and to see to it, that persons under-

stand it before they make it, and to instruct them what a wicked thing it is to lie to God.

P. Very well, Sir; no doubt it is a minister's duty; and equally upon my principles as on yours. I thing it the duty of ministers to teach and instruct persons, and show them how duty is to be performed; but not teach them to neglect duty, if they cannot do it in a perfect manner. Men are no where in the bible forbid to enter into covenant, nor to be baptised, nor to attend the Lord's supper, nor to do any other duty, unless under some special circumstances; but abundantly required to do in a right manner every duty, the one as well as the other. But no special qualification is required of men to attempt to do duty, more under the New Testament than under the Old. All the congregation of Israel were required, except under particular uncleanness: and I cannot find any thing to the contrary under the New Testament. The Pharisees, and lawyers were blamed for rejecting the counsel of God, they not being baptised. (Luke vii. 30.) If it is the duty of all to be baptised, and to attend the Lord's supper, then it is the duty of ministers and churches to receive all those who visibly are qualified.

M. God never proposed any covenant to mankind, but what required real holiness on man's part. The covenant of grace requires repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

P. The covenant of grace requires real holiness, on mans part, for eternal salvation. Repentance and faith are absolutely necessary for salvation. But faith and repentance are not absolutely necessary to give persons a right to attend the means of grace; for those who have not true faith, are called upon to attend the means of grace. Though the objection may be made, that wicked men's prayers are abomination unto God, yet it is their duty to pray, as God commands all men. The Pharisees were blamed for praying in the streets, that they might have glory from men. But they were not blamed for praying; for ungodly men are blamed for not praying. Psalm xiv. 4. Isai. xliii. 22. So men are blamed for leaving off praying; (Job xxvii. 10.) hence it is their duty to pray under their circumstances. Real holiness is required on

man's part for salvation, but whether real holiness is required in order to enter into covenant, is another thing. God declares, (Lev. xxvi.) "that he would punish Israel because they had despised his judgments, and because their soul abhorred his statutes, (v. 44.) and yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them, for I am the Lord their God." Now I do not see, if persons may not enter into covenant only on the plan of being holy, why they must not be cast out on the plan of their being unholy; which is not done, as declared above, and in many other places. But God does really allow unregenerate men to be in covenant, and treats them as being in covenant: 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15. and the Lord God of their fathers sent them his messengers, rising up by times and sending them; because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. God does not declare the covenant void, but rather, he will keep covenant to a thousand generations. If men were not in covenant, they could not be cast out. But they really are in covenant, though unregenerate. For my own part, I freely confess I cannot find that the Scripture represents real holiness absolutely necessary, visibly to enter into covenant, and attend God's ordinances. I know many texts are mentioned, 2 Chron. xv. 15. is one; and all Judah rejoiced at the oath, for they had sworn with all their hearts, and sought him with their whole desire, and he was found of them, and the Lord gave them rest round about. Who can once suppose that this was done in a gracious manner by all the thousands of Judah, and Benjamin, and some of the other tribes? let us hear the covenant, and the truth will appear, ver. 12, 13. and they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers, with all their heart, and with all their soul—That whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman. Israel were fallen into idolatry, and Asa was reforming them. And they were required really to turn from the service of idols to the service of the living God, and this is what is required in the external covenant, viz. to break off from sin, and turn to God.

Another text is that, Acts viii. 37. *if thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest,* by which from the context there cannot be any more consistently understood than his belief, Jesus was the Christ the prophet had foretold, and that baptism was the way in which we are now to be visibly introduced into covenant with God. If the eunuch was a good man, it does not appear that Philip acted upon the plan to receive only good men, or that he could act upon the plan. Having no rule to determine by, we infer that what Philip acted upon, was the eunuch's giving his full assent that Jesus was the Christ.

M. We do not mean to act upon the plan of *knowing* whether men are gracious or not.

P. I cannot say what you mean; but what you say seems to imply it; if you mean they should make no higher profession than we do, why do you tell them, they have no right unless they are gracious? We require persons to make profession of their belief of the Christian religion, their assent to the glorious doctrines, acknowledging their obligations, determining to be faithful according to them. Upon which profession you will receive them, if they will tell you they believe they are gracious. I cannot find any such rule; I wish they were all gracious, and that we had good evidence to believe they were.

M. Is baptism, administered without a divine warrant, a likely means to do a child any good?

P. No, Sir; nor with neither, only as it brings a child visibly into covenant with God, and so puts it into the way of covenant mercies: unless you hold it to be regeneration.

M. But you remember the commission?

P. Yes, Sir; but I think you have not rightly represented it. The commission at large is, Mat. xxvii. 19. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Thus unlimited was their commission to teach and baptise. That in the 16th. of Mark, doubtless means the same thing. Ministers are to instruct persons in the Christian religion and to baptise them. But you do not consider baptism as included in the commission, *Go preach the Gospel to every creature.*

You say, thus unlimited is the commission to preach the Gospel. *And he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved.* You say, the faith which entitles to baptism, is a saving faith. It is quite beyond me how you get this consequence. I imagine you may as easily get another, viz. That baptism is saving. *He that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved.* It is here declared that true faith is absolutely necessary for salvation; but baptism is not. Persons who are never baptised may be saved. The faith here, that Christ speaks of, is not that merely which entitles to baptism, but that which entitles to eternal life, which is clear by the opposite. *He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.* The text does not say, *He that believeth not, and is not baptised, shall be damned;* but *he that believeth not, shall be damned.*

M. You remember when the king came in to see the guests, how he treated the man who had not on a wedding garment?

P. Yes, sir; and readily allow that God will act as the searcher of hearts, at the great day of judgment, and will punish every one who is not found having on the righteousness of Christ.

M. Do look through the country, and observe the conduct of those in the present practice of owning the covenant, and getting their children baptised; are they brought up for God? the youth learn to dress, to sing, and dance, but do their parents appear to understand that they have devoted them to God?

P. Verily, sad and awful is the case, dreadful the neglect, and parents will have an awful account to give. But, pray, sir, can you give me any better account, where churches have practised on the other plan? Hath it appeared that parents have been more faithful to bring up their children for God? And hath it had any better effect; if it hath, it is an argument in your favour; if not, the contrary; it must be an argument against you. Instance the parishes, we may appeal to all who have been acquainted, whether parents have not apparently taken, at least as great pains to instruct and educate their children; and that as many at least have been trained up for God, under the former practice as under

the present. What great benefit then upon your plan? Surely none. But suffer me to mention one disadvantage; the peace of the church is greatly disturbed: which seems to be the chief effect of warm controversies: therefore I wish you gentlemen ministers would treat the subject calmly, if you cannot be persuaded to neglect the controversy. For I tremble to think of the awful consequences, and pray God to prevent them, by leading his churches into the way of all truth. I confess my difficulties are rather increased than diminished, and must think the present practice, well attended to, will be most for the general good. I know some difficulties may be proposed in either practice: but I think contention is best to be left off before it be meddled with, and hope you will join issue with me to drop the affair, as I have no design of engaging in the controversy. In the mean time I earnestly wish to see men truly concerned about the great things of another world, to see ministers and churches joining harmoniously, to spread far and wide the honours of the Lamb that was slain, but is alive for evermore, that God may be glorified, the churches have peace, and be edified. Adieu, dear Sir.

A PARISHIONER.

POSTSCRIPT.

P. Sir, if I mistake not, you represent it to be a new thing to allow baptism to the children of any but those whose parents, one or both, were in full communion, brought in forty years after the first church was formed, by the synod met at Boston in the year 1662. The Rev. Dr. Increase Mather gives us a very different account in the book you quoted. He mentions the opinion of many of the most pious and godly ministers who came over into this country at the first settling of New-England. Mr. Cotton, Mr. Hooker, and Mr. Stone, who came in the same vessel in the year 1633, all freely give their opinion, that children, whose parents are baptised, have a right to baptism, who are in covenant until they

are cast out. Mr. Cotton, minister of the first church in Boston, says, in a letter dated in the year 1634, (which was before 1662.) we may not account such parents for Pagans and Infidels, who are themselves baptised, and profess their belief of the fundamental articles of the Christian faith, and live without notorious scandalous crimes, though they give not clear evidence of their regenerate state. In the year 1635, came over, Mather, Norton, and Shepherd. Three extraordinary men; each give their opinion in the affirmative. In the year 1636, came Patrick and Rogers, Mr. Smith of Weathersfield, Mr Prudden of Milford, and many others, all in the affirmative. So the congregationalists at home, Dr. Owen, Dr. Holmes, and others. From which it appears, that it was no new thing for persons in covenant to have their children baptised, if they did not come to the table. And I think many of their arguments unanswerable. P.

DIALOUGE III.

PARISHIONER. SIR, this third visit I am come to make you, for I have lately read a piece printed at New-London, entitled, "A Dialogue between a minister and his parishioner, concerning the half-way covenant, continued;" said to be written by one of the most learned and ingenious ministers in the colony. I hope therefore, now if ever, by the assistance of such a patron, to be able to carry my point. Instructed by him, I give up the half-way covenant; I grant there is but one covenant. I give up the half-way practice too, as founded only in ignorance, and the mistaken notions of the vulgar. I am convinced, that he that is qualified to have his children baptised, is equally qualified to come to the Lord's table. I come therefore to claim baptism for my child, and a place at the Lord's table for myself, as my proper right. p. 6. However, I am not well pleased at the publication of our discourse in my first visit, although I must confess you have given a fair representation of what passed, because being very dull at that time, I make but a very indifferent figure in the eyes of the public. p. 2.

MINISTER. Be comforted, my friend; no blame is laid on you by the public. I bear it all; and I am willing to bear it for your good: and methinks you have only cause of joy and thankfulness; for to be convinced so soon of your mistake, is no small favour. No doubt the voice of the clergy, who practise the half-way, declaring as one man, that he who is qualified to offer his child to baptism, is equally qualified to come to the Lord's table, has wrought your conviction; for your former faith and practice were grounded merely on the custom of the country: this led you to think that the Lord's supper was more holy than baptism. But while you hear all the ministers, with whom you converse, declare they mean no such thing; they practise the half-way only in condescension to the ignorance, and groundless unscriptural scruples of the common people; you are convinced; you give up the point; you own the command of Christ, *do this in remembrance of me*, is binding on all his disciples: but, pray, upon what grounds, do you now so boldly claim baptism for your child?

P. Although I was "uncommonly dull and muddy," in my first visit; yet, "you know, sir, what I wanted was to have my child baptised. As you told me there was but one covenant, so we were agreed that I had entered into that covenant, the very same covenant that you entered into three and thirty years ago, when you was admitted into the church. And, sir, why may I not have the seal of it set upon my child?" p. 4.

M. Did not I expressly tell you, that "If the covenant owned is the covenant of grace, and if the parent acts understandingly and honestly in the affair, he is a good man; he has a right before God to baptism for his children, and an equal right to the Lord's supper? But that if the covenant owned is not the covenant of grace, those who have owned it, have in the sight of God no right to either of those ordinances, which are seals of that covenant, and of no other: no more right than if they had given their assent to any chapter in the Apocrypha?'

P. True, you did so; and there is but *one covenant*, says my patron.

M. This covenant then is the covenant of grace, which, we are all agreed, requires repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ: or else there is no covenant of grace at all; for he says there is but one. But lay your hand upon your heart, and tell me the truth honestly, did you mean to profess repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, when you owned the covenant? or in other words, did you mean to profess a compliance with the covenant of grace? Pray, sir, recollect and repeat the very words you spake to me in your first visit.

P. You make me blush; for I told you the truth in my first visit, from the bottom of my heart; and this is what I said: I "knew myself to be unconverted; I meant to own the covenant, as the phrase is, and have my children baptised; but I had no design to profess godliness, or to pretend a real compliance with the covenant of grace. This godly people may do, but it had been great hypocrisy in me to do it. To lie to men is bad, but to lie to God is worse. I supposed that owning the covenant was what the unconverted might do." These were my very words: and on these principles I acted, as do all others that I am acquainted with, who own the covenant, have their children baptised, and do not come to the Lord's table; and I verily thought this was right before my first visit.

M. How is it possible a man so honest as you *then* appeared to be, should *now* act such a dishonest part, as you have done? It is my duty, as a minister of Christ, to rebuke you sharply; for *then* you told me, as you *now* own, that you did not mean to profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, upon which I denied baptism to your child; and yet *just now* you pretended you did mean to do it. You have need to blush; this deliberate dissimulation in such an affair, is no small crime. Did your learned patron advise you to this step, to get your child baptised? Is this the way to obtain God's blessing?

P. Be this as it may, I am willing now to make a profession, and publicly to enter into covenant with God, and I have no objection against the form used in your church. I can make

that covenant, and speak truly in the sight of God, notwithstanding I know I have no grace. p. 6, 7.

M. How can a man who knows he has no grace, profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, without wilful lying?

P. I do not mean to make a profession that shall imply conversion. There would be 'special hypocrisy' in doing so. p. 14.

M. What then? do you suppose the unconverted do comply with the covenant of grace? That the unconverted have repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ? That the unconverted choose the Lord Jehovah for their sovereign Lord, and supreme good through Jesus Christ, and give up themselves to his service, to walk in all his ways, seeking his glory?

P. No, sir, by no means. But "if it be true that the Lord Jehovah is my sovereign Lord and supreme good through Jesus Christ, i. e. if it be true, that he who through Christ is the author of being, and of every mercy to all the living, is the sovereign Lord and supreme good of every living soul, it is no harm to avouch it." I mean to give my assent to this truth, and no more.

M. Doth not the devil believe the truth of this proposition as firmly as any wicked man does? and is he in covenant? You have need to be better instructed about the nature of entering into covenant with God, before you can be considered as qualified in point of doctrinal knowledge.

P. No, sir, I am not so ignorant, neither. I know in what sense you mean to understand your covenant. But knowing myself to be unconverted, I cannot profess a compliance with the covenant of grace in that sense. I cannot profess supreme love to God, and that I do actually take him as my God, my chief good, through Jesus Christ. This is not in my heart. Therefore I mean to adopt the words of the covenant in a different sense; even in the sense in which an unconverted man who is at enmity against God may use them, and yet speak true.

M. But this is not to profess a compliance with the covenant of grace. And therefore should you make it, it could give you no right to sealing ordinances for yourself or your

child. Rather is it gross and scandalous dissimulation, very much like what is practised by Arians and Socinians among the clergy of the church of England, when they subscribe the thirty-nine articles, in order to qualify themselves for a benefice upon the establishment; which practice is condemned by all honest men.

P. Be this as it may, I can at least with moral sincerity promise, "to walk in all his ways and keep all his commands, seeking his glory." p. 7.

M. The obedience engaged by one who professes a compliance with the covenant of grace, is that kind of obedience which the covenant requires, viz. an holy obedience, an obedience which proceeds from faith and love. And do you mean to engage this?

P. No, by no means. I only mean to engage what an unconverted man may do, while such. p. 7 [a].

M. But this unholy obedience is not that kind of obedience which the covenant of grace requires at your hands. So that you mean to profess neither to comply with the covenant of grace at present, nor to live such a holy life as it

a Other writers maintain, that such as know themselves to be unconverted, when they join in full communion with the church, are to engage that very kind of obedience required in the covenant of grace, from that time and forward till they die. They are not to profess that they have as yet loved God, believed in Christ, repented of their sins, or lived holy lives; but they are to engage that they will do all this as soon as ever they have joined with the church, and from that time forward till they die. This is Mr. Beckwith's scheme, answer to Mr. Green, p. 26. If these professors are so near being converted in their own judgments, really and honestly, that they do expect to be actually converted as soon as they have joined with the church, it is a pity they do not put off their public profession till the next sabbath; and so be converted first: and then they might make a full profession of a present compliance with the covenant of grace, and so the whole controversy might be ended. This is always the way that honest people take when they enter into the marriage covenant, to which this writer compares this transaction. They do not come and present themselves before the priest to enter into the marriage covenant, till they begin to love each other. And now they can with a good conscience give their consent to the whole marriage covenant, as being conscious to themselves that they already have such an heart in them. But should a pair offer to be married, who had, through their whole courtship, and to that moment, been at enmity against each other, as much as Paul declares every *carnal mind* to be *against God*, (Rom. viii. 7.) it would be looked upon as a hypocritical, mad, and stupid piece of conduct.

requires for the future. In short, you mean to use the words of a saint with the heart of a hypocrite; and so to come into Christ's visible church with the language of a friend, but with the heart of an enemy. Your proposed conduct may serve to give a very true and just exposition to those words of our Saviour, *Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?* As if he had said, "I call you friend, because you, in words, make the same profession which my real friends do. But why do you do this, when at the same time you have the heart of an enemy? why do you act this hypocritical part? Such dissimulation is *special hypocrisy.*" If you could not comply with our covenant in its plain sense, and in the sense you knew we understood it, why did not you rather come like an honest man, and say so, and desire to have it laid aside; and a new covenant, an ungracious covenant, introduced in its room; a covenant which you could make, and act an honest part?

P. I thought there was but one covenant. I supposed the covenant you use in your church, as you understand it, was that one covenant. I thought that baptism and the Lord's supper were seals of the covenant of grace, and of no other. And so I must profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, or I cannot be received among Christ's disciples, or claim the privileges of such. Therefore I put this new sense on the words, that I might consent to them with a good conscience.

M. But the words, in this new sense, are not the covenant of grace, but an ungracious covenant; in sense and meaning exactly like the half-way covenant, in use in some churches, where they have two covenants, (a number of such churches I could name to you,) so while you cry out against the name of a half-covenant, you take the covenant of grace, and turn it into the very thing, in order to bring it down to a level with your graceless heart; and then put on a bold face, and come and claim the privileges peculiar to those who profess a compliance with the covenant of grace itself.

P. Sir, "I am persuaded God has made the Lord's supper a converting ordinance to many, and he may make it so to me." p. 9.

M. And, O my friend, will you dissemble in this shocking manner, in order to get into the church, that you may come to the Lord's table, and be converted! Is this what you mean by *moral sincerity?* I tell you with that plainness that becomes my office, that to come thus, is not the way for a blessing, but for a curse. For *he that eateth and drinketh unworthily*, instead of being in the way of a blessing, exposes himself to the righteous judgment of God; agreeable to the apostle's words to the Corinthians.

P. Nay, sir, the Corinthians "turned the Lord's supper into a feast of Bacchus." And what is this to me? p. 14.

M. Is not deliberate, designed dissimulation, in the most solemn, religious transaction on earth, even in covenanting with the great God, as bad as drunkenness?

P. Nay, sir, but I am expressly commanded to come to the Lord's supper, by Christ himself. p. 15.

M. This command was given to none but Christ's disciples. And in the apostolic age none ever pretended to attend the Lord's supper, but those who had made a profession, and were admitted into the Christian church. As yet you have not made a profession, to be sure, not such a profession as God ever required; nor is the profession you now propose to make, a profession of a compliance with God's covenant, even with the covenant of grace.

P. "I am able to demonstrate, as clearly as any theorem is demonstrated in Euclid, that if an unconverted man may not avouch the Lord for his God, nor resolve to obey him, he may not say, *Our father which art in heaven; forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.*" p. 8. And it is damnable heresy to teach that the unconverted ought not to pray. p. 9. And if they sin in praying, yet it is less sin to pray than not to pray. p. 12.

M. It is a greater sin to lie than to do nothing. Lying is not a means of grace. Lying is not an appointed means of conversion. There are many things unconverted sinners may say to God, and speak true. To speak the truth to God is well: Jam. ii. 19. but to say that which they know is not true, is a thousand times worse than to say nothing. Mat. xxiii. 14. Acts v. 3. And for a man who is sensible that it

is not in his heart to forgive those who have trespassed against him, and that in fact he does not forgive them, to come into the presence of God, and pray, saying, *Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,* is implicitly to ask God not to forgive him; but this is a greater sin than not to pray at all, as all will allow; and it will hold true, as true as any "theorem in Euclid," that lying is worse than nothing, in praying, in covenanting, and in every thing else.

P. Sir, on your plan three quarters of the Christian world will be shut out of the church. p. 14.

M. Were it not better, were it not more for the honour of Christ and Christianity, in the sight of Pagans, Jews, and Mahometans, and in the sight of the ungodly in Christian countries, and more for the good of their own souls, that nine tenths should be shut out of the church, if need so require, than to come in by wilful lying! But for a man to profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, when he knows he has no grace, is no better; and yet without such a profession no man can visibly enter into covenant with God. For God has no other covenant extant, of which baptism and the Lord's supper are seals; for there is but one covenant, as you allow; and to use the words of this covenant in such a sense as to make it a graceless half-covenant, gives no more right to sealing ordinances, than to repeat any chapter in the Apocrypha.

P. If your scheme "should prevail, it would bring back the country into the ancient state of heathenism [b]."

M. And pray, sir, who do you think will have the hottest hell, a heathen who dares not lie, or a Christian who allows himself to lie in the most solemn religious transactions? or which will be the likeliest to be converted by the preaching of the Gospel?

P. "When men of sense and conscience find themselves denied the enjoyment of ordinances for themselves and children in our churches," they will turn to the church of England [b].

M. No man of sense or conscience will desire to make a lying profession to get his children baptised; he would ra-

[b] Mr. Beckwith.

their they never should be baptised than do such a wicked deed. And we stand ready to baptise the children of all, who can, understandingly and honestly, make that profession which God requires.

P. "Christ's visible kingdom requires in its members qualifications like itself, viz. those that are visible and knowable." p. 16.

M. And we, in receiving them, act entirely on what is visible, viz. on their public profession, attended with an answerable conversation, just as they did in the apostolic age.

P. "Every baptised person is a member of Christ's visible church: but I was baptised in my infancy, therefore I have a right to all the exernal privileges of a church-member." p. 16.

M. You remember the answer I gave to this at your second visit, viz. "Baptism alone, in the apostolic age, never made any adult person a church-member without a profession; profession was first made, and then they were baptised. Those therefore that are baptised in infancy, in order to be members in this sense, must make a profession when they become adult. The New-England churches, therefore, are right in demanding it."

P. You must then have a half-covenant for these half-members.

M. No, by no means. They are bound by their parents' act and deed to comply with the covenant of grace itself, as soon as they become adult. With this covenant, and with this alone, do we urge them to comply. Whenever they appear to do it, we receive them to full communion. But if they openly renounce the God of their fathers, and obstinately persist in it, they must be considered and treated as persons who have visibly renounced their baptism, in which their parents devoted them to God through Jesus Christ, to be for ever his.

P. "It is certain that the Gospel contains no rule whereby to determine with any certainty that a man is gracious." And therefore your scheme cannot be acted upon. p. 9, 10.

M. It is equally certain the Gospel contains no rule to determine with certainty that men are orthodox, or sound in the faith. They may make an orthodox profession, but we cannot be certain that they mean as they say. To be sure, if they

allow themselves to use orthodox words in a heterodox sense, as you do in the business of covenanting; and the truth is, let the qualifications be what you please, it is not necessary the church should have a certainty that the candidates for admission to sealing ordinances, have them really and in the sight of God. It is sufficient, on every scheme, that they appear to have them, to a judgment of charity, regulated by the word of God.

P. Such inconsistency may by no means be charged on the Deity, as to institute an ordinance with a design that never can be carried into execution; as is the case, if Christ has not given some infallible criterion, or mark, whereby to know who may be admitted. p. 9, 10.

M. Very well, sir, be pleased to take the inconsistence to yourself, until you can be infallibly certain, that the candidate for admission is really orthodox and morally sincere in the sight of God, as searcher of hearts. And in order to this, you will need the aid of that enthusiastical sort of people of whom your minister speaks; (p. 10.) for it cannot be known, without an immediate revelation. You must get their *spirit* to come and tell you, whether men are as orthodox and morally sincere in the sight of God, as they profess to be before men. For there is no infallible mark whereby you can certainly know it. An immediate revelation is absolutely necessary for this, "as I am able to demonstrate as clearly as any theorem is demonstrated in Euclid."

P. Be this as it may; whether the church must be certain or not; yet we ourselves must be certain, that we have the necessary qualifications, or we must not come. p. 10.

M. We are naturally as conscious of volitions as of speculations, of love as of belief, whenever we look into our own hearts, as all will allow. A man whose mind is wavering between Arminianism and Calvinism, inclining sometimes to one side from the corrupt biasses of his heart, and sometimes to the other by the force of evidence, may not be able to say which he believes. So a man whose mind is wavering between God and Mammom, inclining sometimes to one master with a view to his future interest, and sometimes to the other from an attachment to his present, may not be able to

say which master upon the whole he chooses; for *the double minded man is unstable in all his ways.* But Christ does not desire men to make a profession of being his disciples till they have sat down and counted the cost, and are come to a settled determination; as is plain from Luke xiv. 25—33. And when men are come to that settled determination, which our Saviour there describes, they may say that they have come to it. And this is all the profession which we desire.

P. Thus far I have acted the part of a disputant, and I have now done. Suffer me therefore once more to reassume that honest character which I sustained in my first visit; for let others say what they will, I design to act an honest part. Now the truth of the case is this, I am not specially concerned to know by what rule the church must be governed in admitting members; neither am I concerned to know what they must do who are in doubt about themselves: the only question about which I am exercised, relates to my own particular case. I know I have no grace. I know I am unconverted. I told you so at first, and so I have told all the ministers with whom I have conversed; and how any man, that knows he has no grace, can profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, and speak true, I could not understand, years ago. It was this that induced me to own the covenant, as the phrase is, and not to join in full communion, that so I might have my children baptised. Not one of the ministers with whom I have conversed, appears to justify the principles upon which I acted; but all as one man, say, there is but one covenant, and this one covenant is the covenant of grace: indeed, they explain away the covenant of grace, till they bring it down into a graceless covenant, and then tell me I can comply with that, and ought to do so, and thus join in full communion. But you have fully convinced me of the inconsistence and absurdity of this; and yet I would beg leave to inquire, why might not the covenant of grace be voted out by the church, and a graceless covenant be substituted in its room? and then such as I am could consistently profess a compliance with such a covenant, and have baptism for their children.

M. But if a church should vote out the covenant of grace, or, which is the same thing, in other words, should vote out Christianity, how could it any longer be considered as a visible church of Christ, or as having a visible right to the visible seals of God's covenant? And besides, should you bind your child to one of your neighbours, to learn some mechanic art, why, in this case, might not the covenant be sealed, ratified, and confirmed by the administration of baptism, *in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?*

P. The proposal shocks my mind. It would be a profanation of God's holy ordinance, to take God's seal, appropriated to God's covenant, and put it to man's covenant.

M. But this ungracious covenant is man's covenant, and not God's. And to take God's seal, appropriated to God's covenant, even to the covenant of grace, and apply it to a covenant which God never made, to a covenant made by men, is to profane the holy ordinance; and knowingly to profane God's holy ordinance, is not a duty, nor is this to put ourselves in the way of a blessing.

P. What need is there of any covenant at all?

M. It is not the manner of men to put a seal to a clean piece of paper. Nor did God ever appoint seals to be put to a blank. God's seals were appointed to be put to God's covenant; and we have no right to put them to a blank; and besides, it would be to give up the import of the actions, and to render sealing ordinances unmeaning, empty, useless ceremonies.

P. What shall I do?

M. *Repent and believe the Gospel.* Thus preached John the Baptist: thus preached Jesus Christ; and thus his apostles. And therefore, being emboldened by their examples, I say unto you, *Enter in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

P. I thank you, sir, for your kind and friendly instructions. I ask your prayers.—I must go.

M. I will detain you but a minute longer. You remember your former minister, the author of the second Dialogue *concerning the half-way covenant*, said, "There is no half-way covenant. Doubtless it is the covenant of grace. No one disputes its being the covenant of grace; no one DARE DENY IT." And your present patron says much the same. You remember also, that in your second visit, I told you, that to say this, was implicitly to "yield up every point for which we contend;" and, in this view, I added, "nor do I doubt, if this controversy should go on, it will soon appear, that there is *one who dares deny it*. For otherwise all men of sense will see, that gentlemen on that side of the question are grossly inconsistent with themselves." And now it hath come to pass, that one of the most discerning gentlemen on that side of the question, has published a laboured piece, to prove, that in order to enjoy sealing ordinances for ourselves and our children, we are not to profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, but only with a graceless covenant. This therefore is the only point that needs to be settled, in order to settle the whole controversy; to this point, therefore, I advise you to give a most serious attention. For, if it can be proved that baptism and the Lord's supper are seals of the covenant of grace, and not of a graceless covenant, *the axe will be laid to the root of the tree*. Attend, therefore, to the subject with the utmost impartiality, that you may obtain not only light in your head, but also reap saving advantage to your soul. I have known some Christless sinners, by the means of this controversy, awakened to a greater concern about their eternal salvation than ever they were before. And, be assured, sir, that the truths of the Gospel, if they are not unto your own soul *a savour of life unto life*, will be *a savour of death unto death*. Eternity, an endless eternity, lies before you. You have slept secure in sin long enough; it is high time you should awake. Every circumstance of your own soul, and every circumstance of your dear offspring, calls upon you without delay to awake, and turn to God through Jesus Christ, in sincerity and truth. O, what joy would it give me, ere long to admit you into full communion with the church, on a profession of a compliance with the

covenant of grace, in which you should appear to act understandingly and honestly! That salvation may thus come to you and to your household, may God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ.

My dear sir, farewell.

DIALOGUE IV.

A reply to the parishioner's letter, concerning qualifications for Christian communion; printed at New-Haven.

PARISHIONER. SIR, three times I have been with you heretofore, to get my child baptised; and I am now come to make you a fourth visit, with the *letter* lately printed at New-Haven, in my hand.

MINISTER. I am willing, sir, and ever have been, to oblige you in all things wherein I lawfully may. And particularly, I am willing to baptise your child, if you really, understanding the true import of the action, are willing to offer your child in baptism; even to *dedicate it to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;* in whose name it is to be baptised. But, if you do indeed love God so well, as that you are willing to give him your child, to be his for ever, why are you not as willing to give him yourself? And why should you not, first of all, give yourself up to God through Jesus Christ; and then, after that, give your child to him? In this way God will become your covenant God and Father in this world, and your eternal portion in the next. *This is* all I wait for. And this is what I have, from the beginning, been urging upon you, as your immediate, indispensable duty. You remember what I said to you in your first visit, "if you love God so as to be willing to have him for your portion; if you love Christ so as to be willing to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow him; you may have your choice: you may do as you like: *come, for all things are now ready.* And if you would now in fact make this choice, it would put an end to your present difficulties about your child. Nothing,

therefore, can hinder the baptism of your child, but your continuing to reject God and the Redeemer, by which you practically renounce your own baptism, and forfeit all the blessings of the covenant." And you remember my parting words in your last visit, "every circumstance of your own soul, and every circumstance of your dear offspring, calls upon you without delay, to awake, and to turn to God through Jesus Christ, in sincerity and truth. O, what joy would it give me, ere long, to admit you into full communion with the church, on a profession of a compliance with the covenant of grace, in which you should appear to act understandingly and honestly!" And you are my witness, that at all times I am ready to instruct you, to pray for you, and if need be, to rebuke you with all tenderness and kindness.

P. Inspired by the spirit which runs through the New-Haven *letter*, I must say, that I despise your rebukes, p. 4. and do not desire your prayers. p. 18. "Could I sufficiently dissemble, I should *give you joy*, and gain a speedy, easy admittance into your church;" p. 10.—but, for my part, I look upon you as little or nothing better than the very worst of heretics. For "your principles, sir, are too near of kin to those most shocking principles lately broached in the land, by several who have a fondness for being authors; particularly by Mr. Sandeman, and Mr. Hopkins. Mr. Sandeman says, that *faith is obtained, as the most remarkable discoveries have been obtained, the use of the magnet, Jesuit's bark, and many chymical discoveries; i. e. not when these things, but something else, was looked for.*—Mr. Hopkins says, *it is indeed, as great an absurdity as can be thought of, to suppose that the corrupt, vicious heart, does any thing towards becoming holy, &c. for all the exercises and volitions of the corrupt unregenerate heart are certainly the exercises of sin.*"

"These principles, sir, I look upon of the most dangerous tendency, of any that were ever broached in the Christian world, deism itself not excepted." p. 20.

M. My dear sir, be cool, and think a minute or two who you are, and what you say, and what you have been doing. You are my parishioner. In this character you have made me three visits before this. In this character you are now talk-

ing with me. You knew my principles before you ever desired me to baptise your child. And you knew that the church under my care profess to be in the same scheme of religion with me. And would you desire that your child should be baptised by the worst of heretics! Or would you desire to join with such a church! Where is the honesty or consistence of your conduct! You are inspired with a spirit, indeed; but I fear you *know not what spirit you are of.*

As to our sentiments touching *total depravity, works done by unregenerate men,* and the *sovereignty of divine grace in the conversion of sinners,* we profess to agree with the *Assembly of divines at Westminster.* And you know, that their *confession of faith,* and *larger* and *shorter catechisms* are adopted by the church of Scotland, as their test of orthodoxy; and are much the same with the *Savoy confession of faith,* which is adopted, in general, by the churches in Massachusetts and in Connecticut. But,

These public formulas declare, as to *total depravity,* that "we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil." And as to *works done by unregenerate men,* that "although for the matter of them they may be things which God commands, and of good use to themselves and others; yet because they proceed not from a heart purified by faith, nor are done in a right manner, according to the word, nor to a right end, the glory of God; they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God. And yet their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing to God." And, as to the *divine sovereignty in the conversion of sinners,* they say, that "all those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased in his appointed and accepted time effectually to call, &c. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from any thing at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call," &c.

And the famous Mr. Stoddard, in his *Treatise concerning the Nature of Conversion,* says, p. 7. "If men do not act from gracious motives, and for gracious ends, they do not the thing that God commands; there is no obedience to God in what

they do: they do not attend the will of God." And, p. 9. "There is an opposition between saving grace and common grace; common graces are lusts, and do oppose saving grace. Making his own salvation his end, is contrary to making the glory of God his last end: hating sin, not because it wrongs God, but because it exposes him, is resisting the command of God: bringing every thing into subserviency to his own ends, is opposite to the bringing every thing into a subserviency to God's glory. The man that hath but common grace, goeth quite in another path than that which God directs unto: when he goeth about to establish his own righteousness, he sets himself against that way of salvation which God prescribes. Rom. x. 3. There is an enmity in the ways of such men as have but common grace, to the ways that godly men take." Thus Mr. Stoddard.

And now, my parishioner, I appeal to you, to judge whether these quotations, out of the confession of faith and Mr. Stoddard, "are not as near of kin to those shocking principles, which you look upon of the most dangerous tendency of any that were ever broached in the Christian world, deism itself not excepted," as any thing I ever advanced from the pulpit or the press.

And if some of the important doctrines of Christianity are more obnoxious to you than deism itself; that is, if you are nearer a deist than you are a Christian; certainly you are not fit to be a church-member, or to offer your child in baptism, or to partake of the Lord's supper, according to your own principles. For you say, that men must be orthodox. And you cannot deny, that the church of Scotland, and the churches in New-England, have as good a right to judge for themselves, what principles are agreeable to the word of God, and of importance to be professed, as you have to judge for yourself. We are willing, that those who look upon the doctrines contained in our public formulas, as being worse than deism, should hold communion among themselves, but we think it an inconsistence in them to desire to be members of our churches.

P. 'Unholy obedience is a contradiction in terms; for holiness and obedience are the same thing.' p. 8.

M. In saying this, you condemn Mr. Mather's scheme of an external graceless covenant, by wholesale. However, strictly speaking, what you say is true. And in this view Mr. Stoddard's words are exactly right, (speaking of the unregenerate,) 'There is no obedience to God in what they do.' And thus it is said by the church of England, in her 39 articles; 'Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his spirit, are not pleasant to God. Yea, rather, for that they are not done as God hath commanded and willed them to be done, we doubt not but that they have the nature of sin.' See article 13. Do you, sir, believe this?

P. No; far from it. Rather I believe that 'all the obedience of an unconverted man is holy obedience.' Yea, I believe, that 'the obedience of an unrenewed man, so far forth as it is obedience, is as holy as any that a gracious man can yield. Though it is but a partial and imperfect obedience, yet just so much as there is of obedience, just so much holiness. And, 'a measure of strength is given him by God, to walk in all his ways and keep all his commands, seeking his glory.' p. 8, 9. And in any other view I must acknowledge, that the unconverted covenanter would be 'perjured.' For, *to swear to obey a covenant which we cannot obey, is perjury.* And therefore, had the unconverted no power to yield a holy obedience, it would be perjury in them to enter into covenant engagements to do it. p. 8.

M. If I understand you right, and you are in earnest in this declaration, then you believe that the unconverted are, in a measure, really holy. And therefore, are not totally depraved, as is asserted in the Confession of Faith adopted by our churches. And if this be so, then you are not sound *in* the faith. And those who are not sound in the faith, have no right to church privileges, according to your own principles. You, therefore, cannot consistently claim church privileges of any of our churches. Indeed, you may think our Confession of Faith not agreeable to the word of God, and you may think the same of the articles of the church of England: if, therefore, you would act a consistent part, you should join, neither with us nor them; but rather form a new church, on a new plan, with those who think as you do. For it is ab-

surd for those who differ in essentials, to walk together as brethren. And to profess our belief of articles of religion, which we do not believe, for the sake of church privileges, is as gross dissimulation in the laity among us, as it is in the clergy in England, who subscribe the 39 articles of that church, in order to enjoy a benefice, when they do not believe them, as in the case with the Arians, Socinians, and Arminians, among them. In a word, if you really disbelieve the doctrines of *total depravity*, and of *divine sovereignty*, you can by no means consistently join with us.

P. 'These principles deny the present state of the unregenerate to be a state of probation: they deny him to be a moral agent: they deny the justice of punishment for any sin.' p. 21.

M. So says Dr. Taylor, so says Dr. Whitby, so says Dr. Stebbins, and all other Pelagian and Arminian writers I ever read. They all agree, that the doctrines of *total depravity* and of *divine sovereignty*, as held by the Calvinists, are absolutely inconsistent with moral agency. They have said it a thousand times, and they have been answered as often. Thus stands the controversy. "Because I have no heart to love God, therefore I cannot be bound in duty to love him." "Because I am *dead in sin*, and opposite to all good, therefore that law which says, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things*, cannot justly reach me." "Because we all, with one consent, excuse ourselves from coming to the Gospel feast; therefore we are not in a state of probation." "Because God says, *may I not do what I will with my own?* therefore, we may say, we are not in duty bound, to regard his law, or hearken to his Gospel." Reasoning, which if it has weight in it, proves the fundamental maxims of the bible to be false; for that book teaches, that we may be *dead in sin*, and yet *deserve to be damned* for that sin: that God is not *obliged* in justice, or by promise, to grant converting grace to any impenitent sinner; and yet it is the duty of such sinners *every where to repent*. But you may, at your leisure, see my sentiments on these subjects at large, and my confutation of Mr. Sandeman's scheme of religion, both at once, in a book lately printed at Boston, entitled, *An Essay on the Nature and Glory of the Gospel*. However,

I will readily grant, that there is an absolute necessity of denying total depravity on the one hand, or of giving up the covenant of grace, and substituting a graceless covenant in its room, on the other hand; in order to open a door for the unconverted, as such, to enter into covenant with God, and join in full communion with the church, consistently with truth and honesty. But, yet so it happens, that on either plan men cannot consistently be admitted into our churches. For, if they deny total depravity, they must be deemed not sound in the faith, according to our approved standard; and therefore, must not be admitted. And if they substitute a graceless covenant in the room of the covenant of grace, they go off from the plan on which our churches were originally founded; and so, consistently, cannot be members of them. We must have a new confession of faith, and a new plan of church order, and form new churches, before either of these ways will answer the end. Besides, if the unconverted have a degree of real holiness, and do, though in an imperfect manner, yet really comply with the covenant of grace, then the unconverted are, in fact, entitled not only to the seals, but also to all the blessings of the covenant of grace; even to pardon, justification, and eternal life. Than which nothing can be more contrary to the whole tenour of Scripture, which every where declares all such to be under the wrath of God, and curse of the law, condemned already, liable to be struck dead and sent to hell at any moment. John iii. 18. 36. Gal. iii. 10.

P. The unconverted Israelites made a profession of the very covenant you plead for; and why cannot we? p. 28.

M. You can, if you will, do as they did, viz. *flatter him with your mouth, and lie unto him with your tongues.* But then you ought not to take it ill, if the true nature of your conduct is, from the word of God, set in a clear light before you.

P. But I do take it ill; indeed I do. Particularly the rebuke you gave me for dissimulation, in my last visit, I do not take well at your hands. For I am not the guilty man. p. 3.

M. The man I rebuked for dissimulation, was my parishioner, whose conversation with me was printed in the New-

Haven *Dialogue*; and who, in his first visit, told me 'that he did not mean to profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, when he *owned the covenant*.' On which I let him know, that he, for that very reason, had no right by virtue of that profession, to claim the seal of the covenant of grace for his child. For this very same man afterwards came again to me, to baptise that very same child, and put on a bold face, and declared, that "he had entered into that covenant," and therefore had a right to the seal of it.

P. "I shall not trouble myself to defend this parishioner against the charge of dissimulation." p. 4. But I am not the same man. p. 3.

M. If you are not the same man, why do you take the charge of dissimulation to yourself *now*? Or why did you pretend to be the same man *then*? Why did you call yourself by the same name? And why did you begin with me in these words? "Sir, I find the dialogue which passed between us the other day is printed." Is it not evident, by this, that you intended then, that I should consider you as the very same man? but no sooner do I find you contradicting yourself, and rebuke you for it, but you cry out, "this dialogue did not pass between you and me." To use your own words, sir, "it is easy to see your unlucky mistake." And "it is really pleasant enough" to see you drove to a necessity of changing your name, in order to get rid of the fault, which otherwise you must, even in your own judgment, be reputed guilty of. We have heard of men's changing their names when pursued for their crimes, that they might avoid their pursuers; but did you before now ever hear of a parishioner, that went to his minister to get his child baptised, that did so?

P. Be this as it may, the grand question is this, viz. "Can a man, who knows he has no grace, profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, without wilful lying?" p. 5. You say he cannot: I say, he can.—Indeed, once I was of your opinion; and this was the reason I did not join in full communion; but I am of another mind now. And I can, though I know I have no grace, yet make a profession of a compliance with the covenant of grace, as honestly as any man. And to charge any one with wilful lying for this, is virtually to charge the ministers and churches through the land with that horrid crime. p. 3.

M. As this is a matter of importance, it deserves to be thought of seriously, and to be thoroughly looked into. And if you will be serious only long enough to understand the proposition, you will be forced to believe it. For,

By the covenant of grace, we mean that covenant which promises pardon and eternal life to those who comply with it. By a compliance with it, we mean, saving grace; i. e. such gracious exercises as are infallibly connected with salvation. Such as *repentance toward God*, and *faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*; which imply supreme love to God and Christ in their very nature, and a cordial disposition to a life of sincere obedience to all God's commands [d]. By one who has no grace, we mean one who is entirely destitute of this repentance, faith, love, and new obedience, which are connected with eternal life; being *dead in sin.*

When therefore it is said, that "a man, who knows that he has no grace, cannot profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, without wilful lying;" the truth of the proposition is as evident, as when it is said, that "a man who knows that two and two are but four, cannot say, that two and two are five, without wilful lying." And therefore, as soon as the proposition is understood, it cannot but be believed. There is no way to avoid it. For,

1. If you explain down the covenant of grace into a graceless covenant, with which a graceless heart may really comply, it will not help your cause in the least. For if a graceless heart may comply with this graceless covenant, yet it still remains a self-evident truth, that a graceless heart doth not comply with the covenant of grace. Or,

2. If you represent an unconverted graceless man, as not being *dead in sin*, and *without strength*; but as really having a degree of spiritual life, and spiritual strength, and spiritual

d A saving compliance with the covenant of grace, is what does not in the least degree take place in the unregenerate, but does actually take place in all true believers. For although it implies saving grace, yet it does not imply perfect holiness. Those, therefore, who are true believers, may make a profession honestly; but those who are not, cannot. To say, that a true believer cannot make a profession honestly, because he is not perfectly holy, supposes that a saving compliance with the covenant of grace implies perfect holiness. Which is not true, as is granted on all hands.

ability to yield holy obedience to all God's commands; and so as complying with the covenant of grace, in reality, though but in an imperfect degree, it will not help your cause at all. For this graceless man, so called, is in fact a gracious man, and is entitled not only to the seals, but also to the blessings of the covenant of grace. Because he does, in fact, comply with it. Rather it runs you into the absurdity of saying that some unconverted, graceless sinners, are real converts and true saints, and have a title to eternal life, i. e. of expressly contradicting yourself. Or,

3. If you say, "a graceless sinner may comply with the covenant of grace, with moral sincerity, though not with gracious sincerity:" it will not help your cause. For there is but one kind of real complying with the covenant of grace; and this entitles to eternal life. For he that really complies with the covenant of grace, doth, in so doing, act graciously. Thus, he who loves God supremely with moral sincerity, does love God supremely, in reality; but this real supreme love to God is a gracious and holy love to God. And you have already said, "that obedience to God is always holy," "and the obedience of the unrenewed, as holy as any that a gracious man can yield." p. 8. But if so, then this obedience is performed with gracious sincerity, as really as the obedience of any gracious man is. But, if your graceless man does comply with the covenant of grace, in a gracious manner, he will go to heaven along with true saints. And, therefore, that saying of our blessed Saviour is not true—"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

It remains, therefore, that this proposition must pass for a self-evident truth, which cannot but be believed, as soon as it is understood, viz. "A man who knows he has no grace, cannot profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, without wilful lying." You may as well say, that *black is white*, or that *a dead man is alive*, or that a *graceless sinner is a real saint*, as say, that "a man, who knows he has no grace, can profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, honestly and with a good conscience." And, therefore, a man must either not know what he is about, or his conscience must be

very much seared, or he will not dare to profess a compliance with the covenant of grace while he knows he has no grace. Indeed, it is a full proof that a man is to a great degree destitute of moral honesty, if, with his eyes open, he dare to make such a profession. It is at least as gross wickedness as that which Annanias and Sapphira were guilty of, in saying, *This is all the money*, when they knew that *it was not all*. They *lied to the Holy Ghost*, and this man flatters God with his mouth, and lies unto him with his tongue. Psal. lxxviii. 36.

To be consistent, therefore, we must vote the covenant of grace out, in our church, and vote in a graceless covenant in its room, or you cannot be admitted as a member. And if we should vote out the covenant of grace, and vote in a graceless covenant in its room, we should, so far as this vote should have influence, cease to be a visible church of Christ. Nor should we have a visible right to baptism and the Lord's supper, which are seals of the covenant of grace, and of no other covenant. For there are but two covenants which now take place between God and man, viz. the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace. Rom. iii. 27.

P. I am not able to think of this seriously, and to answer it honestly. I have no other way therefore to get rid of the truth, but to misrepresent and ridicule it. p. 5—9. However, I have two objections against this scheme, viz. 1. The church cannot know who do really comply with the covenant of grace. p. 16. Nor, 2. Can any join with the church but those who have full assurance[e]. p. 19.

e Obj. Baptism alone makes me a church-member, or it does not. If it does, then I have a right to the Lord's table: if it does not, then the church have no right to discipline me.

Ans. If baptism alone gives a right to the Lord's table, then all baptised persons in Christendom, young and old, good and bad, the excommunicated not excepted, have an equal right: which none will grant. And if the church have no right to discipline any but those who have a right to come to the Lord's table, then they have no right to discipline any who are guilty of heresy or scandal; for such have no right to come to the Lord's table. The objection is founded on two propositions, both of which are false, even in the judgment of the objector. viz. 1. That baptism alone gives a right to the Lord's table, without any other qualification whatsoever: upon which rule, even the excommunicated cannot be

M. You may find a full answer to these objections in what I have already published on this subject, which you appear not to have attended to. But pray, what rule would you have the church proceed by in the admission of members? Would you have *certain evidence*, that the candidates for admission have the requisite qualifications insisted on by the church?

P. Yes, indeed. For, 'this is my principle, that every man, (asking special ordinances,) is as CERTAINLY qualified to partake of the Lord's supper, as he is to breathe, unless there is CERTAIN EVIDENCE that he is disqualified." p. 16.

M. But one, who is at heart a deist, and who lives secretly in adultery, may, to answer political ends, "ask for special ordinances," and there may be no "certain evidence" of his crimes. Therefore, according to this NEW DIVINITY, this infidel, this adulterer, is as certainly qualified to partake of the Lord's supper, as he is to breathe."

P. Shocking consequence! However, this I lay down for an infallible truth, that all who have visibly entered into covenant, as I have done, "to walk in all God's ways and to keep all his commands," are bound by their own vow to attend special ordinances. p. 10, 11, 12.

M. What! Bound, though they know themselves to be unqualified? Is the abovementioned infidel and adulterer bound? What! bound in the sight of God, and a well-regulated conscience, to come to the Lord's table, as he is? Pray, who bound him? God never did; nor does the vow he publicly made to "walk in all God's ways, and keep all his commands," bind him to come *as he is*. For this is what God *never commanded*.

And it is equally evident, that God never commanded men to make a lying profession in any instance, either verbally or practically. But to seal a covenant is, (practically,) to profess a compliance with it. To seal a covenant, therefore, with which we know we do not comply, is what God, *never*

debarred. 2. That the church have no authority to exercise discipline over any but those who have a right to the Lord's table: upon which rule, those who are disqualified for the Lord's table, by heresy or scandal, are not subjects of discipline.

commanded. Yea, it is what God has forbidden in every text in the bible which forbids lying. So that, if the covenant to be sealed in baptism and the Lord's supper, is the covenant of grace, as you allow it is, then those who know they have no grace, are forbidden to seal it, by every text in the bible which forbids lying. And therefore, that command, *do this in remembrance of me,* is beyond all doubt, a command which respects believers, and them only; agreeable to the publicly professed belief of the church of Scotland, and the churches in New-England, held forth in their public formulas. Indeed it is the duty, the indispensable duty of every one to whom the Gospel comes, and their highest interest, to comply with the covenant of grace, and that on the very first invitation. As soon as the glad tidings come to our ears, *come, for all things are now ready, whosoever will let him come;* we ought not to delay a moment, we ought not to make one excuse, we ought not to feel the least reluctance: no, rather on the contrary, we ought, with Peter's hearers, *to receive the word gladly,* that same day, and to make a public profession and join with the church the first opportunity. Mat. xiii. 44.—And to neglect this, is a sin so great and aggravated, as to expose the neglecters to be given up to God in this world; Luke xiv. 24. and to be cast off for ever in the world to come. Mark xvi. 16. So that your mouth is stopped, and you stand guilty before God. But, to return to a consideration of your visible standing. Pray, sir, was you esteemed a church-member, in full communion, in the town where you lived before you moved into this parish?

P. No, sir, by no body. I never looked upon myself to be a church-member, in this sense of the phrase. I never meant to join with the church, nor did the minister or the church mean to receive me as a church-member, and accordingly, I never met with the church when they had church meetings upon church business. I never staid when the church was desired to stay, as they sometimes were, after worship on sabbaths, and at other times. I never voted when the church were called to give in their vote in any matter whatsoever. Nor had I any right to go to the Lord's table without making a public profession over again, and

thereby *joining with the church*, as the common phrase was. No such thing was allowed where I was brought up. So that I did not think myself a church-member before I moved into this parish, nor was I esteemed and used as a church-member. Yea, it never entered into my heart, to pretend any such thing, till my New-London patron taught me to say so, and to put in these high claims, and to deny my old principles, and contradict myself, and finally, even to deny my own name, and pretend to be another man. And since then I have felt "BRAVELY," and have looked down upon you with great contempt.

M. The more men mock God in religion, the more proud, haughty, and insolent, are they apt to be towards their fellow men. A religion begun in ignorance like yours, and carried on and perfected in this shocking manner, if it may do to live with, yet will not do to die by.

P. Be this as it may; yet to say as you do, "better do nothing than lie," tends to increase the number of prayerless persons, and prayerless families, to put an end to all means, and in the end to overthrow all religion. p. 20.

M. Doth not God himself say, Eccl. v. 5. *Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay*; i. e. in other words, "better do nothing than lie." And will you condemn the Holy One of Israel? Either give up the bible, or abide by its sacred maxims. Besides, there is a difference between *covenanting transactions* and *common means*. And accordingly, Christ ordered his ministers to *preach the Gospel to every creature*; but he did not order them to *baptise every creature*. For,

Graceless sinners may hear the Gospel preached, may hear all the truths and duties of it explained, proved, and urged; and may attend, yea, may be very attentive, and meditate on them day and night, till they *are pricked at the heart*; they may forsake vain and vicious company, become sober, serious, deeply distressed about their eternal welfare. They may spend much time in secret prayer, *(and an awakened sinner cannot fail to do it,)* and frequently spend whole days in fasting and prayer, as Mr. Brainerd used to do, under his terrors, when he was unconverted; pray read his life: I say,

graceless sinners may do all this, without making any profession of godliness. Yea, they may do all this, and yet in all profess that they have no grace, no love to God in their hearts, but are dead in sin.

You insinuate, that the doctrines which I preached tend to licentiousness. I appeal to facts. Look from the reformation down to this day; look through England, Scotland, and Ireland; look through the British colonies in America, and through our West-India islands: and put the question; when and where, and among whom, has there been, or is there now the greatest strictness maintained, and the most constant, diligent, and painful attendance on means? Either, among Calvinists, who heartily agree with the Westminster confession of faith and catechisms, and where these doctrines are taught privately, and preached publicly? or, among Pelagians, Arminians, and Semi-Arminians, who are constantly teaching and preaching in another strain? While the assembly of divines sat at Westminster, composing the formulas, which I am now vindicating, London, that great city, was full of sermons, and prayers, and strictness: but since these doctrines have been laid aside, and contrary doctrines introduced, they are become very licentious and debauched. The more you flatter the sinner, the further will he run from God and all good. But tell him the truth, pierce him to the heart, and he will begin to cry, *What shall I do to be saved?*

P. But can an unconverted sinner say the Lord's prayer, and speak true? i. e. can he profess to God, that he hath all those holy and pious affections in his heart, which our Saviour designed those words to express? p. 12.

M. I also will ask you one question; answer me; and then I will answer you. *Is not the man, who thus says the Lord's prayer, entitled to pardon and eternal life?*

P. No doubt he is. For, our Saviour says, *If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you,* with a design to explain in what sense he meant that petition should be made, *forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.* And besides, in the same sermon, he expressly declares, that *every one that asketh, receiveth.*

M. It therefore follows, that no unconverted man ever

said that prayer, in that sense, unless you will own, what seems to be a necessary consequence of the scheme you are pleading for, that some unconverted men are entitled to pardon and eternal life; which is so contrary to the most plain and express declarations of Scripture, (John iii. 18. 36. Gal. iii. 10.) that as yet, you have not ventured to own it.

Thousands, no doubt, have after a sort said the Lord's prayer, who have fallen short of eternal life. For the papists say the Lord's prayer oftener than protestants do, ten to one, and for every *Pater-Noster* they count a bead. And while sinners are secure in sin, such kind of praying, i. e. using words without any meaning, will quiet their consciences. For they now think they have done their duty. *For without the law sin was dead: and so I was alive without the law once.* But no sooner do they fall under deep convictions, but that they find something else to do. Pray read Mr. Brainerd's life, and there you may see how an awakened sinner feels, and how he prays.

P. Thus far, sir, I have acted the part of a disputant. I have passed over nothing in the New-Haven letter that is new and to the purpose. For this letter-writer has not said one word for my old beloved scheme, *the half-way.* Now therefore, I beg leave to assume the friendly, honest character, which I sustained in my first visit. For let others do as they will, I am resolved to be an honest man. Wherefore, to sum up the whole,

1. I believe, that there is but one covenant, of which baptism and the Lord's supper are seals. And that he that is qualified to offer his children in baptism, is equally qualified for the Lord's table. And therefore, that the half-way practice is not according to Scripture.

2. I believe, that any man who seals any covenant doth, in and by the act of sealing, declare his compliance with that covenant which he seals: because this is the import of the act of sealing.

3. I believe, that it is of the nature of lying, to seal a covenant, with which I do not now, and never did, comply in my heart; but rather habitually and constantly reject. Therefore,

4. I believe, that a man who knows he has no grace, cannot seal the covenant of grace, honestly and with a good conscience.

5. I believe, that the only point which needs to be settled, in order to setttle the whole controversy, is this, viz. Are baptism and the Lord's supper seals of the covenant of grace, or of a graceless covenant?

6. I believe, that there are but two covenants between God and man, called in Scripture language, *the law of works and the law of faith*, but commonly called the *covenant of works*, and the *covenant of grace*. And that the doctrine of an external covenant, distinct from the covenant of grace, is not from heaven, but of men. Thus, sir, you have my creed.

M. Sir, I hope the time will soon come, when you and all my other parishioners, through the country, will well understand the controversy, and be able to judge for yourselves what is truth and what is not so. In the mean time, remember, my friend, that *he that knoweth his master's will and doth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.* Behold, *now* is the accepted time, and *now* is the day of salvation; therefore *to-day*, if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart. Every moment in which you continue practically to renounce your baptism, by rejecting Christ Jesus and his Gospel, you hang over hell, ready to sink under the curse of the divine law, into eternal burnings. For *he that believeth not is condemned already.* Wherefore, *repent and believe the Gospel.*

Some seem to think that baptism alone makes a man a Christian, and brings him really into the covenant of grace, so as that he is no longer under the covenant of works, as the unbaptised are. But the apostle Paul did not think so. For he, speaking to the baptised Galatians, among whom he feared there were some who were self-righteous, Christless sinners, he says, Gal. iii. 10. *As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.* "As many," be they circumcised, and baptised too, "as are of the works of the law," as depend on their own works for justification in the sight of God, "are under the curse," even *they are under the curse*; for it is writen, *Cursed is every one*, &c. But if baptism delivers men from the covenant of works, they cannot *any one of*

them be under its curse. For no man is liable to the curse of a law which he is not under. Besides, in this apostle's view of things, it was peculiar to true believers to be really in the covenant of grace, and not under the law as a covenant of works. Rom. vi. 14. *For sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under law, but under grace.* For, according to this scheme of religion, every soul is either *married to the law;* and these *bring forth fruit unto death;* or *married to Christ;* and these *bring forth fruit unto God.* (chap. vii.) Wherefore, know assuredly, that your baptism, although it increases your obligations, and so enhances your guilt; yet it alone gives you not the least right to any one of the peculiar blessings of the covenant of grace, so as at all to exempt you from the curse of the law; but you are now, this moment, in fact, as liable to be struck dead and sent to hell, by the divine justice, as any unbaptised sinner in the land. And should you die in the state you are now in, you would most certainly be damned along with the unbaptised heathen: only your hell would be hotter than theirs. Mat. xi. 20—24. For *if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.* Rom. ii. 25.——Wherefore I advise you,

First of all, immediately to repent of your sins, and return to God through Jesus Christ, looking only to free grace through him for pardon and eternal life. For I testify unto you, that if you trust in your baptism to recommend you to God, Christ shall profit you nothing. Gal. v. 2. Wherefore, give up this, and all your other self-righteous claims, and apply to the mere, pure free grace of God, through Jesus Christ, as all your hope For, as to acceptance with God, *there is no difference* between the circumcised Jew and the uncircumcised Greek, or between the baptised nominal Christian and an unbaptised Indian. Rom. iii. 22. If you will thus *repent and believe the Gospel,* and in this way, not in falsehood, but in truth, "avouch the Lord Jehovah to be your sovereign Lord and supreme good, through Jesus Christ," you shall, in fact, have your choice, that is, have God for your God and portion in time and eternity. This, my dear Parishioner, this is the way to take upon you your baptismal

covenant, and to get delivered from the curse of the covenant of works, and to enter into the covenant of grace, in reality and in truth. This therefore do without delay. And having done this, then make a public profession of religion, and join yourself to God's people, and bring your dear child and dedicate it to the same God to whom you have dedicated yourself. And let it be the business of your life to bring up that, and your other children, in *the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

And now, as you travel through the country, for I understand you are become a great traveller, and gain admittance into all companies, and among men of all denominations and character, I advise you to use your utmost influence to diffuse a friendly spirit every where, among all your acquaintance, in this controversy. Particularly, urge it upon parishioners of your acquaintance, to treat their ministers in a respectful manner, while they apply to them for light and instruction, or when they undertake to dispute these points with them; especially, wherever your influence extends, let no man on our side of the question, treat his minister ill because he is in the opposite scheme. It is not manly, it is not Christian-like, it is not prudent, to do it. For there is no way to promote truth so effectually, as to hold forth light in love; and to treat your opponents in a kind and friendly manner. For my part, I have an high esteem for many in the ministry, who differ in their practice in the admission of persons to sealing ordinances for themselves and for their children, from what I think is right. For it is a controversy which has not been attended to, nor is it an easy thing, at once, to get rid of the prejudices of education, and in the face of a frowning world to espouse the true Scripture plan. I have great hopes, however, that ere long we shall think and act nearer alike, when there has been sufficient time to understand one another, to weigh and deliberate, to get rid of the prejudices of education, &c. &c. In the mean time, I most earnestly desire, that the controversy may be carried on, in the most open, fair, honest, cool, calm, friendly manner possible.

Who this *letter-writer* is, is not known by the public, as he has secreted his name. And whether it was with design,

or through inadvertance, that he hath given up the doctrine of total depravity, as held forth in Scripture and in our public formulas, I shall not determine. Perhaps, on second thoughts, he will retract every thing he hath said, which hath that aspect. I wish he may. But if it should come to pass, as I fear it will, that in the course of this controversy, numbers should openly fall off to the Arminian scheme, in order to defend their lax manner of admission to sealing ordinances, I advise you, to keep by you and to spread every where among your acquaintance, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and larger and shorter Catechisms: a book which will be of excellent service to teach people sound doctrine, and to guard them against Arminian errors.

To conclude: I shall always retain a most grateful sense of your kind treatment of your minister, *when acting yourself*, and be always ready to do every kind office in my power, which either you, or any other of my parishioners, shall need at my hands. I esteem it among the great blessings of my life, that I live in a parish, and among a people, so well disposed to treat a minister with that respect which is due to his office. And I hope you may never find me wanting in any instance of kind and friendly conduct towards you. I wish you the best of heaven's blessings.—My dear parishioner, Adieu.

EARLY PIETY RECOMMENDED;

OR, THE

OBLIGATIONS TO EARLY PIETY,

AND THE

NECESSITY OF RENOUNCING YOUTHFUL VANITY,

REPRESENTED IN

A DISCOURSE on Eccles. xii. 1.

DELIVERED AT STRATFIELD, OCTOBER 7, 1747.

Mat. vii. 13, 14. Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate, and narrow the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

EARLY PIETY RECOMMENDED.

ECCLESIASTES xii. 1.

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.

THERE are many considerations of very great weight, to awaken our mind to a holy reverence and most sacred attention, when we read or hear the word of God. It is the word of God, the infinitely great and glorious God, the supreme Lord and sovereign Governor of the whole world; whose are *all things*, and whose *we are*, and who has a *right* to command us; the God that angels fear, and to whose voice they always hearken with the deepest reverence, esteeming all his injunctions most sacred. And besides, *all* that he speaks to us is calculated not only for his *own glory*, but also for *our best good*. As the kind Father of our spirits, in his infinite wisdom he marks out that path for us to go in, which is not only right and fit in itself, but also suited to render us most happy. His laws are all *holy, just, and good*. And that he may reach our hearts the more effectually, he singles out particular cases, and adapts himself to the particular tempers and circumstances of the children of men. He knows just how it is with mankind, how they feel, what their hearts are apt to be set upon, and what their temptations and dangers are, and how to speak a word in season to every soul. So of old he used to deal with the children of *Israel*: all the nations round about them were idolaters, and worshipped their gods under some visible form. And he knew what temptations his people would be under to do as others did, and conform to the common mode. How often, therefore, and how solemnly, by Moses and by the prophets, does he warn them to beware, lest at any time they should be led away from the Lord their God to other gods, or to worship *him* under some visible form, as the heathen nations round about did *their deities*. So here in our text, he admonishes persons in their *youth*.

He knows the temper and temptations of young people; how apt they are to be unmindful of the God that made them, and to forsake their own mercies to follow after lying vanities, and run into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. He sees them, he pities them; and as the *great Governor* of the world, and the *kind Father* of their spirits, he calls after them, reproves and warns them. "*Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men.* Stop! hearken! consider! No longer forget the God that made you; be not unmindful of the hand that formed you, and holds your soul in life, nor delay any longer; but REMEMBER NOW *thy Creator in the days of thy youth.*" As if he had said, "I see what your temper is, I know what your thoughts are, what your temptations, and what your danger: you are inclined to have no sense of God upon your spirit, to give a loose to your vain imaginations, to indulge wanton affections, and put far away all serious thoughts; flattering yourselves with vain hopes of a better time hereafter. The world looks gay to you, and your companions entice you along: but verily that road leads to eternal ruin. I see you, and know the way you take; I pity you, I call to you, I warn you, I command you, *remember thy Creator*; be mindful of God *now*, without any further delay, *in the days of thy youth.*" And should not young people hearken when God thus speaks to them, and attend with the utmost solemnity! Especially, considering that all this is in and through Jesus Christ, the Mediator. For so bad were we, and such were our guilty circumstances, that we cannot in any reason suppose the great and *holy Governor* of the world would have had any thing to do with us in a way of mercy, but for the interposition of a Mediator. It would have been a reproach to the holy Majesty of heaven and earth, to have ever spoken one kind word to a *guilty world*, but for the mediatorial undertaking of his own Son. It would have been inconsistent with the honour of his Majesty, of his holiness and justice, and sacred authority; because, by our apostacy from God, we were become too bad to be pitied, too bad to have any mercy shown us; so bad, that every thing was too good for us, that was better than damnation. Such was

our deplorable case! But the Son of God has interposed as Mediator, to secure his Father's honour, and to open a door for mercy. He was made of a woman, made under the law; has obeyed, suffered, and died, to make atonement for sin by his blood, and to bring in everlasting righteousness. In his obedient life and death, the holiness and justice of God have received perfect satisfaction, and the honour of his law and government is secured; that now the great Governor of the world may show favour to sinners, and yet not so much as seem to be a favourer of sin. Hence he has reprieved this guilty world from ruin, and entered upon methods of grace, to recover sinners to himself. And shall we not now hearken, to any kind word he speaks, and attend to every command with all our hearts!—O that these thoughts which have been suggested, might awaken us all, and particularly every youth in the assembly, to attend with the utmost solemnity of mind, while we take the words of our text into serious consideration! They are immediately spoken to you that are in your youth, and that from God, the great Governor and Judge of the world. In this warning he seeks your welfare; and it is the precious blood of Christ, which has purchased for you the mercy of this call from God. That I may assist you to dwell a while upon these words in serious thoughts to better advantage, I will observe this method in the following discourse:

1. I will endeavour to show what is implied in remembering God.

2. What obligations young people are under to this.——

And,

3. Offer some directions and motives.

I am,

1. To show what is implied in remembering GOD. And in general, it is a heart-affecting, soul-transforming, vital, efficacious remembrance of God, that is here recommended; and not any mere empty, dry, lifeless notion of God in the head. It is such a remembrance of God, or such a sense of God on the heart, as effectually divorces and weans us from all other things, and influences us to love him with all our hearts, to choose him for our portion, take up our contentment in him as our ALL, and devote ourselves to him, to walk in all

fall away from both. Mat. xiii. And therefore, if we open the door wide enough to let in the unregenerate, as such, into the church, we must not insist on their being 'fixed' what to believe, or 'fixed' what to do; for there is *no root* in them. Much less must we affirm, that they must be 'infallibly certain' that they are 'fixed,' when, if the bible is the word of God, it is infallibly certain, that they are not 'fixed.' And their very confidence, that they are 'fixed,' is a full proof that they do not understand and believe the Gospel, which declares that they are not 'fixed,' that they have *no root* in themselves.

But to return:

Our author says, (p. 79.) 'If it is a real gracious state, that gives us a real right to join with the church; then it is a known gracious state that gives us a known right.' And he adds, 'This is a self-evident proposition.' And this he says in order to prove, 'that no man can, with a good conscience, make this profession, without as certain a knowledge of the gracious state of his own heart, as he must have of any particular fact about which he is called to give an evidence in a civil court.' But if this argument is conclusive, then his own scheme is overthrown. For, turn the tables, and the argument stands thus:

"If it is real orthodoxy, that gives us a right to join with the church; then it is known orthodoxy, that gives us a known right." And I may add, 'this is a self-evident proposition.' And therefore, according to Mr. M. "no man can with a good conscience, join with the church, without as certain a knowledge of his orthodoxy, as he must have of any particular fact about which he is called to give an evidence in a civil court." So then, according to Mr. M. unregenerate, graceless men, must be as certain which of all the various schemes of religion in vogue, in the Christian world, is the right one, as they are of any fact which they see with their eyes, to the truth of which they can make oath; or they cannot, with a good conscience, join with the church: i. e. they must have as high a degree of infallibility as the apostles had under inspiration, or they cannot, with a good conscience, join with the church. But does Mr. M.

believe this? Does he look upon his graceless, conscientious church-members, as infallible as the apostles?

To say, that real orthodoxy is not a requisite qualification, is to give up his own scheme. To say, that although real orthodoxy is a requisite qualification, yet a degree of infallibility, equal to that which the apostles had under inspiration, is not necessary to qualify a man, with a good conscience, to join with the church, is to give up his argument. For the apostles were not more certain, which was the orthodox scheme of religion, than we are of facts, which we see with our eyes, and which we can swear positively, that we did see. And our certainty must be equal to this, he says, or we cannot, with a good conscience, join with the church. Every conscientious, graceless church-member, therefore, according to Mr. M. is as infallible, in points of orthodoxy, as was the apostle Paul. But does Mr. M. believe this? No, by no means. What then does he mean? Why, he means to confute our scheme, by an argument built on a principle which he himself does not believe to be true; and which, were it true, would overthrow his own scheme.

Ojection. *But I know that I believe such and such doctrines; yea, I can swear I believe them.*

Answer. You can swear that you believe your own creed; but can you swear that your own creed is orthodox? For not a confident belief, but real orthodoxy is, according to Mr. M. a requisite qualification to church-membership. Therefore, according to him, you must be certain that your creed is orthodox; even as certain as you are of facts which you see, and to the truth of which you can make oath before the civil magistrate; which is a degree of certainty equal to that which the apostles had under inspiration.

The Arians, the Socinians, the Pelagians, the Papists, &c. &c. can swear that they believe their schemes; but does this qualify them to be church-members? Would Mr. M. receive them to communion? If so, then it is no matter what scheme of religion men believe, if they do but believe it confidently. And then orthodoxy is not a requisite qualification for church-membership, but rather bigotry!

Our author says, p. 78, 79. 'This affair of covenanting with God, Moses styles, Deut. xxix. 14. *This covenant and this oath.*' And 'will it do to tell people, that they may give a positive evidence, when they have only a prevailing opinion about the fact?' That is, will it do, to tell people that they may enter into covenant with God, and bind themselves under the solemnity of an oath, as the Israelites did to keep covenant, (Deut. xxvi. 27. *Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken to his voice,*) when they have only a prevailing opinion, that they have *such an heart in them*; but have not a certain knowledge of it, as they have of facts, which under oath, they can positively declare to be true?

Answer 1. When men have not *such a heart in them*, they are not qualified to enter into *this covenant and this oath.* And therefore, if unregeneracy consists in being without such an heart, and in having an heart opposite hereunto, agreeable to St. Paul's doctrine, Rom. viii. 7. then unregeneracy disqualifies us for entering into covenant with God.

2. No man can, with a good conscience, enter into this covenant, unless he is conscious to himself, that he has such an heart, to such a degree of clearness, as to be satisfied in his conscience, that he indeed has such an heart. And therefore, for men who know that they have not such an heart, to enter into this covenant, is gross immorality. But he who is satisfied in his conscience, that he has such an heart, may with a good conscience enter into this covenant. That is, his conscience will approve of his conduct in so doing.

3. A man may be satisfied in his conscience, that he has such an heart by prevailing evidence, short of strict certainty. For instance, Mr. Mather was satisfied in his conscience, that it was his duty to write in the defence of the external covenant, upon prevailing evidence of its truth; but yet if it were put to him, he would not positively declare under oath, that he knows it to be true; as he knows the truth of facts which he sees with his eyes. For he declares in his preface, 'Yet I am not so fond of my own judgment, or tenacious of my own practice, but that *I stand ready to give them both up*

when any one shall do the friendly office of setting light before me.' And therefore he cannot swear that his scheme is the true Scripture scheme. He knows that he has written on this subject. This fact he is certain of. He could give oath to this before a civil court. Nor could he give up the truth of this fact, let all the light in the world be set before him. Nor could he with a good conscience, offer to give up the truth of this fact, on any condition: because he knows that the fact is true. He knows it with certainty, with infallible certainty. But he has not equal certainty that his scheme is true. It was only his prevailing opinion. And so, he offers to give it up on further light. Yet he acted conscientiously in writing in its defence. That is, his conscience, instead of condemning, approved of his conduct. For the truth of this I appeal to Mr. M. The application is easy. And yet,

4. It is readily granted, that we are to blame for every wrong judgment we make in moral matters, relative both to truth and duty, how conscientious soever we were in making the judgment. Thus, for instance, Paul, before his conversion, was conscientious in judging and acting against Christianity; but still he was to blame for judging and acting as he did. And if Mr. M.'s external covenant is unscriptural, how conscientious soever he has been in believing and acting as he has, yet he is to blame. So, if we judge that we have such an heart, when in fact we have not, how conscientious soever we have been, yet still we are criminal. For we might have known better. It was our fault that we did not know better. And in this world, or in the next, we shall know that the blame lies at our door. Therefore,

5. Those words of our blessed Saviour ought to be attended to and regarded, by every one who entertains thoughts of making a profession of his holy religion. Luke xiv. 25—35. *And there went great multitudes with him,* and instead of pressing them to an inconsiderate profession of his religion, as a means of their conversion, *he turned and said unto them, if any man come to me,* by an open public profession, *and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also,* so as to have an

heart to give up all for my sake, *he cannot be my disciple*; but will in time of trial desert me. *And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me*, with a heart to suffer every thing for my sake, *cannot be my disciple*; but will in time of trial desert me. Therefore, consider what you do. *For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost*, &c. &c. *So likewise, whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.* My disciples are the salt of the earth. *Salt is good*, if it is salt; *but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned.* It is good for nothing. *It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill: but men cast it out*, as good for nothing. And what are such disciples good for, who will desert me in time of trial. Attend to what I say. *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

CONCLUSION.

Mr. M. speaking of our sentiments of religion, as contained in president *Edwards' treatise concerning religious affections*, which is beyond doubt one of the best books that has been published on experimental religion and vital piety since the days of inspiration, says, (p. 36.) 'These sentiments are surprisingly spread in the land, in the present day.' Yes, and always will spread among people, in proportion as true religion revives and spreads. Nor am I without hopes, that Mr. M. should he thoroughly look into the scheme, and get a right understanding of it, would yet himself become a proselyte to it; and if he should become a proselyte to it, he would soon give up his external covenant, as being wholly inconsistent with it.

And it is quite certain, that when the divine promises, scattered through the sacred writings, relative to the glorious prevalence of true Christianity, come to be accomplished, that Mr. M.'s graceless covenant will become a useless and an impracticable thing. When *nations shall be born in a day*; when *all the people shall be righteous*, when *the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth as the waters cover the sea*; people will not desire to make a graceless profession. Nay, they can never be persuaded to do it in that day. For then they

will *love Christ more than father, or mother, or wife, or children, or houses, or lands; yea, more than their own lives.* And men who really love their wives and children, are able, ordinarily, to say with truth and a good conscience, that they do love them. Yea, it would be thought a sign, that men, generally, if not universally, hated their wives, in any kingdom, city, or town, should it be known, that 'ninety-nine in an hundred of them had such doubts, that with a good conscience they could not say that they loved them. Mr. Stoddard, in his *Treatise concerning the Nature of Conversion*, says, (p. 79.) 'We do not know of one godly man in the Scripture, that was under darkness about his sincerity.' And our catechism says, 'The benefits which in this life do either accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, are *assurance of God's love*, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end.' And when religion revives in its purity and glory, assurance will become as common a thing among professors, as it was among the apostolic converts, in the apostolic churches. And even now, should a man and woman present themselves before a clergyman, to enter into the marriage-covenant, and at the same time declare, that they doubted their love to each other to such a degree, that with a good conscience they could not give their consent to *the form of words* in common use, because that would imply a profession of mutual love, no judicious man would think them fit to be married. The application is easy.

Nothing renders a graceless covenant needful, but the prevalence of gracelessness among our people. For did our people all of them *love Christ more than father and mother, wife and children*, no man would desire to have the covenant of grace set aside, and a graceless covenant substituted in its room, in our churches. When, therefore, that day comes in which *satan shall be bound*, who at present *deceives the nations of the earth*, that he may *deceive them no more*: when the great *harvest* comes, of which what happened in the apostolic age was but *the first fruits*; and *the stone cut out of the mountain without hands becomes great, and fills the whole earth*, and *the God of heaven sets up a kingdom*, and *all peo-*

ple, nations, and languages, serve him, and *the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven is given to the people of the saints of the Most High, and all dominion shall serve him*; then, even then, true godliness will be universally professed, and universally practised.

Since, therefore, this graceless covenant will ere long be universally exploded, and *rooted up,* as shall *every plant which our heavenly Father hath not planted,* why should not we all now unite to give it up, and to invite our people to become Christians indeed, to profess and practise according to the true import of their baptism? It is as much their duty, and as much their interest, to become Christians now, as it will be in any future period of their lives. They have from God no leave to delay. Thanks be to God, 'that these sentiments are surprisingly spreading in this land, in the present day.' Nor ought it to pass unnoticed, that every attempt to prevent their spreading has hitherto had the contrary effect. For while those who oppose them, how ingenious and learned soever they be, are obliged to run into the grossest absurdities and inconsistencies, in their own defence; as one error leads on to another, it naturally tends to open the eyes of all candid men, who attend to the controversy. And may we not hope that so candid and ingenious a writer as Mr. Mather is represented to be, 'who is not fond of his own judgment, or tenacious of his own practice, but stands ready to give them both up, when any one shall do him the friendly office of setting light before him,' will, upon a calm review of all that has been said, become a friend to *the good old way* of our forefathers, the first settlers of New-England, and come into that plan on which the New-England churches were originally formed:—Which may God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ. AMEN.

A

LETTER

TO SCRIPTURISTA.

SIR,

FROM the first settling of New-England, it has been the constant practice of all our *congregational churches*, to require a public assent to the chief articles of the Christian faith, as a *term of communion* in special ordinances. Nor is there to this day, one such church, or, to be sure, not above one, that ever I heard of, but what insists upon such a public assent, as that, without which they will not admit any to sealing ordinances. Our churches have formulas, which they call *the doctrines of faith*, or *the articles of the Christian faith*. The minister publicly reads them to such as are to be taken into full communion; and they give their assent to them before all the congregation. For our churches believe, (and act upon it,) that none ought to be admitted to full communion, but such as are sound in the faith; and that the church has a right to judge of their soundness in the faith: and they do judge those to be sound in the faith, who publicly profess, (acting, to a judgment of charity, *understandingly* and *honestly*,) their assent to the articles of the Christian faith, which they have agreed to, and drawn up to be used in the admission of members: as they are persuaded said articles do express the true sense of the holy Scriptures.

Were they convinced, that any of *their articles* were contrary to Scripture, I know not of one, or to be sure not above one, of all our churches, but would immediately *alter* their articles. For we all profess, that the *bible* is the *only standard* by which our religious sentiments are to be formed; and we mean, by our creeds and confessions, only to express *our sense* of Scripture: not to make a *new bible*; but only to express how we understand *the bible that God has already*

made. And this, to the end that others may know our principles, and we know theirs.

When therefore a number of ministers, and of private gentlemen, who belong to our churches, have in late years appeared so very zealous against *creeds* and *confessions*, as tests of orthodoxy, I was at a loss to know what they meant, and what they designed, and what alteration they would have in our customs and practices, if they could new model things just to their minds. Would they have men admitted into the church, and appointed public instructers, *without any regard to their religious principles?* Or, do they not like it, that our articles *should be writ down?* Or, would they have *new creeds* drawn up, *contrary to our present*, and *imposed* on our churches, and our churches *not allowed to judge for themselves!* Or, what do they mean? And what would they have?

Thus stood the case in my view, when two or three years ago, hearing that something new was about to be published *against creeds* and *confessions*, by a certain ingenious gentleman, I sent the following lines to the printer of the Connecticut Gazette, which he was so good as to give place in his paper, No. 149.

'*To the Printer,*' &c.

'As several pieces of late have been published against creeds and confessions of human composure being used as tests of orthodoxy, which are thought not fully to reach the merits of the cause: it is desired, that in the next piece of that nature the following questions may be answered.

Quest. I. Is it of any importance what men's principles be, if their lives are but good? For if it is not, then not their religious principles, but only their external conduct, need be inquired into; and they may be admitted to sealing ordinances in the church of Christ, or be licensed to preach, and ordained to the work of the ministry, or be employed as presidents, fellows, and tutors, to take care of the education of our youth, whether they are orthodox or not. And so there will be no need of any tests of orthodoxy, human or divine.

'But if it be of importance that they should be sound in the faith, and if their religious principles must be inquired into: then it is inquired,

'*Quest.* II. Whether particular Christian communities, as well as particular persons, have not a right to judge for themselves, what is the true sense of Scripture, and what principles are necessary, according to the holy Scriptures, to be believed and professed, in order to an admission to sealing ordinances, or to be employed as public instructors?

'For if particular communities have not a right to judge for themselves, they ought no longer to claim it. But if they may not judge for themselves, who shall judge for them? Shall all the various sects among protestants go back to the pope to be set right? But, if it be granted that particular communities have a right to judge for themselves, it is inquired,

'*Quest.* III. Why they may not manifest what is their sense of Scripture, in writing, as well as by word of mouth? i. e. why they may not compose a written confession of faith to be used as a test of orthodoxy [k].

'Till a good answer to these questions can be given, it is not to be expected that the use of creeds and confessions should be laid aside. And they are proposed to the public, with a desire they may be answered, with that seriousness and good nature, with which all religious controversies ought to be managed. And such an answer shall be attended to with an honest desire to know the truth, by

'*Decem.* 24, 1757. PAULINUS.'

And now, after above two years, to consider of the matter, you, my good friend *Scripturista,* have been so kind as to give a public answer to my *three questions.* For which, (although you have misunderstood me in a very material point,) I return you my public thanks. And if you speak not only your own sense, but the sense of your whole party, I humbly

k A test is that by which we try something to discover what it is. The bible is the test by which we try doctrines to discover whether they be divine truths. A confession of faith is a test by which we try those who offer to be of our communion, &c. to discover whether they are orthodox, i. e. whether they believe those doctrines which we judge true, and necessary to be professed, in order to be admitted to communion, &c. in this latter sense *only* is it, that the Christian church ever maintained, that confessions of human composure might be used as texts of orthodoxy. See Professor Dunlop, on Creeds and Confessions.

conceive we are not so far apart in this particular controversy, but that it may pretty easily be settled to the satisfaction of all concerned. For if I understand you right, you have granted the whole I designed; and disputed against a point which no denomination of Christians ever maintained. Besure, none in New-England.

I. You not only grant, but contend earnestly for what we all lay down as our first principle, and fundamental maxim, viz. That not creeds, nor confessions, but *the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, are the only rule of faith*; by which we are, each one for ourselves, to be determined what to believe in matters of religion; and to which the final appeal is to be made by all denominations of Christians, and by which they ought to decide all their religious controversies. Our creeds are to express nothing but what we verily believe to be the true sense of Scripture. And if any think we mistake the true sense of Scripture, the dispute is to be decided, not by our creeds, but by the Scripture; comparing Scripture with Scripture. So saith our platform; and this we are fully agreed in. 'The smallest grain of an *inspired testimony*,' says Professor Dunlop, in his piece on creeds and confessions, 'is momentous enough, in a just balance, to weigh down a cart-load of human *canons* and *confessions*.' Edit. 2. p. 78.

II. You grant, 'that some of the principles of religion are so important, that none ought to be admitted to sealing ordinances, or to be employed as public instructers, who do not profess to believe them.' (p. 3.) Yea, you grant, that if they do at first profess to believe them; yet if afterwards it appears they do not, 'ministers ought to be silenced;' (p. 13.) and by parity of reason, church-members censured. You grant this, I say; and therefore, to silence and excommunicate such if they continue obstinate, provided it be done with a Christian temper, is so far from being persecution, that you look upon it a Christian *duty*; according to *Tit.* iii. 10.

And thus far you agree with the church of Christ in all ages of the world.

III. And you also grant fully, just as fully as I would have you, 'that particular Christian communities, as well as particular persons, have a right, not *had a right* once, ten or

twenty years ago, but every day of their lives; 'have a right to judge for themselves, what is the true sense of Scripture; and what principles are necessary, according to the holy Scriptures, to be believed and professed, in order to an admission to sealing ordinances, or to be employed as public instructers.' (p. 4.)

And if they have a right to judge for themselves, you must grant, that it is their duty to *exercise* this right, and not remain in suspense; but come to a judgment; not to be *ever learning, and never come to the knowledge of the truth*, like the condemned by the apostle; 2 Tim. iii. 7. but rather to believe *with all the heart*, and to *continue in the things which they have learned, and been assured of*. Ver. 14.

Yea, how can a Christian church admit any to communion, or settle a minister, until first they are agreed what principles are orthodox and necessary. If they put off coming to a judgment, and agree upon nothing as a rule for themselves to act by, in the admission of members, or settlement of a minister, 'to be of any force till they are dead;' (p. 11.) then they must admit no members, and settle no ministers, till they get into the next world: or else must admit members and settle ministers on this maxim, 'that it is no matter what men's principles be, if their lives are but good.' Which still you will not allow. There is an absolute necessity, therefore, upon your own principles, that Christian communities settle these points, and agree what principles are necessary, even at their first formation.

And surely, a right to judge for themselves does by no means imply, that they must *never come to a judgment*; never be *grounded and settled* in a firm belief of all the great and important doctrines of the Gospel; but always be as unsteady *children, tost to and fro, and carried about* like leaves in autumn, *with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive*: for this is expressly contrary to the word of God. (Col. i. 23. Eph. iv. 14.) And equally contrary to common sense. For a *right to judge for ourselves* is so far from being inconsistent with our *coming to a judgment*, that it can be of no use to us but as it is improved to this end.

But you say, 'we must alter our belief, if afterwards we see just cause for it.' p. 5. 11. 19. True; and so we must give up the bible itself, if we *see just cause for it*. And cease any longer to believe that two and two make four; if we *see just cause for it*. And what then? Must we therefore never come to a judgment about the plainest and most evident matters? Or, do you think that the great truths of the Gospel cannot be clearly determined from the bible? I hope that *believing* the great doctrines of the Gospel *with all the heart*, with *a full assurance of faith*; yea, with *all the riches of the full assurance of understanding*, in the manner true Christians did in the apostolic age, (Acts viii. 37. Col. ii. 2. 1 Thes. i. 5. Heb. x. 22.) does not appear in your eyes like a groundless confidence, a faith built on no solid, rational, lasting evidence. A hope you would not have the minds of Christians always fluctuating and unsettled in their belief, *like a wave of the sea*, and so in consequence hereof, they be *unstable in all their ways*, like those condemned in Jam. i. 6, 7, 8. Nor can I persuade myself, that you think that a firm and persevering belief of Christianity is inconsistent with the impartiality of an honest man, who is a *free inquirer* after truth. And that there is no way to be a strong believer, but by being a great bigot. If indeed you are thus far gone into scepticism, and feel yourself thus at a total loss what to believe, and what to disbelieve; I wonder not you should be for delaying to draw up a creed for yourself, lest you should soon alter your mind, and get into another scheme of religion, a scheme condemned by your former creed. But methinks, to put off 'till after death,' is too long, if you intend to be saved at last by Christianity. But if it is no matter what men's principles be, if their lives are but good; all is well, whether you ever get settled in your principles in this world, or in the world to come.

But why need I thus reason with you? For whatever sound some of your words may seem to have, and however some of your readers may understand you; yet you cannot really mean that Christians, or Christian communities, should delay and put off their being settled, fully settled in the belief of the great doctrines of the Gospel. For you do expressly

grant, that it is of so great importance that men be sound in the faith, that they must not be admitted to communion, or ordained to the work of the ministry, without it. Which supposes that the great truths of the Gospel are so plain and evident, that they may and ought to be known and believed; and Christian communities to be well settled in these things, even at their first foundation.

IV. You grant, 'that particular Christian communities may manifest their sense of Scripture in writing, as well as by word of mouth.' p. 5. i. e. they may compose *creeds*. For a *creed*, (which comes from *credo, to believe*,) consists of a number of articles, which *I believe to be taught in the Holy Scriptures*. And what particular use is to be made of their *creed* by Christian communities, you have already virtually granted, For,

V. Although this clause, 'A written confession of faith to be used as a test of orthodoxy,' does 'really surprise you, (p. 6.) taken in the *frightful sense* you have put upon it; yet, taken in the sense I designed the words, it seems you fully approve the thing. The *name*, 'a test of orthodoxy,' frights you, and no wonder, considering the frightful idea you put to the words. But the thing designed by that name seems quite familiar to your mind. For there are some religious principles which appear to you of so great importance, that you would neither admit to sealing ordinances, nor to the office of a public instructor, those who would not profess them. And these principles you fully believe are taught in the holy Scriptures. So that, in the sense I use words, they are your creed, and your *test of orthodoxy*. For you believe them, and insist upon the profession of them as a *term of communion*. And possibly their evidence appears to you so clear and full, that you are persuaded you never shall, and in fact you never will, alter your belief, as to them. And yet you are no bigot. But rather you profess to stand ready to alter your belief, 'when you see just cause for it.' However, till then you would join to silence, and excommunicate, a minister who should be proved guilty of gross heresy, according to your notions of heresy, i. e. according to your creed, used as *a test of orthodoxy*. (p. 13.)

Yea, it is plain you have no notion of any possible way for you to judge of your neighbour's belief, whether it be what you call orthodox or not, but by comparing it with your creed, i. e. with what you *believe to be the true sense of Scripture.* For, as you say, (p. 20.) 'having settled your principles according to your understanding of Scripture, you do necessarily judge of particular cases according to them, or agreeable to your own judgment of the true meaning of the Scriptures.' Nor indeed, sir, has any body else any other way of judging. For there can be no other. And in fact, all parties, however they differ in their disputes, yet agree to a tittle in their conduct. They all have but one and the same way to judge of their neighbour's orthodoxy, viz. by comparing their neighbour's profession, with what they themselves *believe to be the true meaning of Scripture,* i. e. with their own creed. For we must judge by what we believe to be the true sense of Scripture, or not make the Scripture our rule of judgment, in any respect at all [1].

So that it is plain, that all the great zeal, loud out-cries, and hot disputes against creeds and confessions, being used as a test of orthodoxy, must have arisen from some misunderstanding of the case; or else men have not been honest; but rather disputed against creeds in general, merely because they hate and want to get rid of the established creed of their country. Had it not been for this circumstance, they might have been as great friends to creeds and confessions as any of their neighbours. Now which of these, my friend, is the case with you? Do you hate Calvinism? Do you dispute against creeds, because you disbelieve our confession of faith, and

[1] The admirers of Dr. Taylor look upon those as orthodox, who understand the Scripture as he has explained it. For they esteem his writings, 'as being a just exposition of the word of God in those doctrines or articles which are contained in them.' Nor would they choose a man to instruct their children in divinity, who did not *judge of truth and error,* as Dr. Taylor does. And why should they condemn that in others, which they approve of in themselves? Or why should they desire to misrepresent it to the world, when at the same time, rightly understood, they and all the world must agree to justify it? Let them confute, if they can, what we mean to maintain. Or if they know they cannot, let them own it; and not try to blacken, by misrepresentations, what they dare not but justify, rightly represented

want to get rid of it? No, you say, the man is 'guilty of scandal who imputes any such corrupt design to you.' (p. 28.) Very well, sir; it remains therefore, that your dislike of creeds, as tests of orthodoxy, must be founded on some mistaken notion of the thing. Which mistaken notion, were it removed, all the dislike of so orthodox, and so honest a man, would immediately cease. And accordingly it is observable, that having in your letter granted the whole I designed, by my *three questions*, to lead gentlemen on your side to feel they must grant; or turn skeptics, on the one hand; or deprive particular Christian communities of their right to judge for themselves, and act according to their own consciences, on the other; I say, having granted the whole I designed, you state a question absolutely of your own making, and set yourself to dispute against a point no denomination of Christians ever professed to maintain. To be sure, it appears to me so very absurd, that instead of its being espoused by almost all Christians since the reign of *Constantine the great*, as you imagine, I very much doubt whether there ever was in any age, so much as one man of tolerable sense that meant to hold it. You indeed insinuate that *a certain gentleman* maintains it. But I dare say you can no sooner get him to believe it, than you can to believe that the same thing *may be*, and *not be*, in the same sense, and at the same time. And it is not fair to put a meaning to a man's words he never intended.

VI. The question you dispute against, is this, 'whether particular Christian communities, having drawn up in writing a confession of faith, agreeable to their present judgment of the true sense of Scripture, have not just right and authority to IMPOSE it on themselves, and all their members, as a test of orthodoxy, and term of communion; and for the future use it as such?' (p. 6.) By the word 'IMPOSE,' you afterwards explain yourself to mean, "they oblige themselves to use it as a test of orthodoxy as long as they live; even although they are in fact afterwards convinced that it is not orthodox." Or, in other words, "they bind themselves to believe, profess, and practise according to it, and not to alter in the least, although 'they see just cause for' alteration. (p. 11—19.

Strange notion! *Bind themselves not to alter their belief, although afterwards 'they see just reason for it!'* But if I do, in fact, *see just reason to alter my belief*, i. e. what appears to me to be just reason, I cannot but alter my belief. It is not in my power to believe a doctrine to be taught in Scripture, while at the same time I am fully convinced it is not taught there. And no man living ever meant to oblige himself to this. Indeed, it would be to oblige himself to an absolute contradiction; to believe a thing to be, and not to be, in the same sense, and at the same time. For, as I before said, 'a creed consists of a number of articles, which *I believe are taught in the sacred Scriptures*. And therefore said articles are not *my creed*, if *I do not believe that they are taught in Scripture*. But to believe they are taught in Scripture, and to believe that they are not taught in Scripture, at the same time, is to believe a thing to be and not to be; which is what you must be sensible, on the least reflection, no man ever meant to do. If the church of Rome is vain enough to believe herself infallible; yet she never was so absurd as professedly to oblige herself to persevere in her belief of her own infallibility, although in time to come she should be fully convinced of her mistake.

'They may not alter their principles,' (you say, p. 11.) 'or at least their profession afterwards, though on further inquiry they should think they had mistaken the sense of Scripture at first;' i. e. they are obliged to proceed to silence a minister, or censure a private christian, as an heretic, directly against the light of their own consciences, when they are fully persuaded they are sound in the faith, the error not being in them, but in their own creeds. To set which notion in all its horrors, you tell a long story of a church trial, carried on upon this scheme, and conclude with saying, 'That if the church have a right to make a contrary judgment, if they see just reason for it,' then tests of orthodoxy must be given up. (p. 19.) So that this is the precise notion of tests of orthodoxy with which you are so terribly frighted, and against which you dispute so zealously, as having in all ages of the church been the grand source of all imposition, tyranny, and persecution. Although at the same time it does not appear that this notion

of a test of orthodoxy, was ever embraced by any Christian church in the world.

Among all the reformed churches, none are more zealous for creeds and confessions, as tests of orthodoxy, than the church of Scotland. And Mr. Dunlop, professor of divinity in the university of of Edinburgh, in his preface to their confession, who wrote to show the justice, reasonableness, and necessity of it, as a PUBLIC STANDARD OF ORTHODOXY, may be supposed to speak the common sense of that church. But he expressly saith, edit. 2. p. 143. 'According to the principles of our confession, every man would search after the truth with the utmost impartiality; attend to the voice of divine revelation, though it may sound very differently in his ears from the public standard of any fallible church. It is base and inglorious, for any person to dissemble the truth when he discovers it, or neglect any proper means of spreading it in the world, because he may thereby disoblige the majority and lose their favours.' Again, p. 147. 'As good men will never subscribe a confession but when persuaded in their consciences of the conformity of its articles to divine revelation; so they will with courage oppose themselves to it; when convinced of their error, they will not be afraid openly to abandon it, and will prove as zealous in promoting what they now see to be the mind of God in the Scripture, as if there had never been such a thing as a human creed in the world.' Thus far this author, celebrated by all the friends of creeds and confessions, as one who has written genteelly and unanswerably. Read him, my good Scripturista, and answer him fairly, and we will all come over to your side. For we all maintain, that we have a right to change our sentiments, 'when we see just reason for it.'

But till then, we ought to persevere in the truth, how much misrepresented soever it is; yea, although dressed up as *absurd* in itself, and the native source of almost all evil.

But since you are so orthodox and so honest a man, and apparently a man of sense, pray let me stand and wonder a little, and in my turn be 'really surprised,' how you ever came to think the *Christian church in all ages* meant to espouse *tests of orthodoxy* in the sense you have charged upon

them. Can you produce any history to prove that this was the case in the primitive times, or in later ages? Does Eusebius say so, or the celebrated Du Pin? Does Sleiden, or Burnet, or Neal, or Bowers, or any other historian of credit? To be sure, so honest a man as you, would not charge so *black* and *absurd* an opinion upon the Christian Church in all ages, out of pure wilful malice, on purpose to bring an odium upon all the friends of *creeds*. And how a man of your good sense could possibly be guilty of so gross a mistake, is very hard to say. To attribute it to wilful malice, I cannot; to attribute it to your ignorance, I do not know how to do it. And on the whole, I am 'really surprised.' You don't pretend to quote but one author, and it is not only plain from his *piece*, but he expressly tells me by word of mouth, that he never meant any such thing: but if he did, how does this prove that the Christian church in all ages have been in this scheme? Or what warrant had you to raise such an evil report against the church of Christ?

As to the questions, you state, p. 6, 7, 8. &c. The answer is short.—'Who have right to make *such* tests of orthodoxy?' No body.—'What principles should be put into *such* tests?' None at all.—'And who should be bound by them?' None in this world, or in the next.

But you have said so much about *imposition*, and *persecution*, (p. 21—28.) that we must stop here a few minutes, lest ignorant people should be *imposed* on. You do not mean to charge your own scheme, my good friend, with being a persecuting scheme. Nor do you think it necessary that our churches should give up their right to judge for themselves, And become indifferent to all principles, as willing to receive an Arminian or Socinian to communion, as an orthodox Christian; and particularly declare that it is no matter what men's principles be, if their lives are but good; and so commence Pagans [m], in order to avoid the dreadful guilt of *impo-*

m The Pagans in the apostolic age exceedingly cried out against the Christian sect, for *damning* all parties but their own. i. e. for preaching as their Master had bid them, *he that believeth not shall be damned.* Mark xvi. 16. Nor all the various tribes of heathen idolaters, with all their different gods, were in full charity with one another: and so they all joined to look upon the Christian sect, as unsocial and inimical to the human kind. See *Warburton's Div. Leg.*

sition and *persecution*. Pray, my good Scripturista, do tell me who acts the manly honest part, and who the part of an *imposer* and *persecutor*?

Aristocles was educated in a Socinian church at Siena. One article of their faith was, that *Jesus Christ is a mere creature, who never had any existence before he was born of the Virgin Mary*. And they professed to understand all those texts of Scripture which speak of his divinity, to imply no more than that he was *God by office*. Aristocles, at the age of sixteen, joined in full communion with the church, and publicly gave his assent to *their creed*. At the age of *twenty-four*, the former minister being dead, Aristocles was chosen his successor, and put into possession of all their parsonage lands for life, on condition he should continue to preach the doctrines embraced by that particular church. Which, not having studied the controversy, he inadvertently engaged to do, being by the influence of education full in the Socinian scheme. However, within two years after his ordination, having carefully searched the Scriptures, Aristocles was fully convinced of his error, and became a sound believer and a good man. And having counted the cost, he came to a full resolution, at the risk of all his outward comforts, honestly to inform his church and congregation of the change of his sentiments; and to preach up the *divinity* and *satisfaction* of Christ, and endeavour to set these points in the clearest light from the holy Scriptures. And at the same time honestly to acknowledge to his people, that he had *broken the covenant*, which in the times of his ignorance he had made with them; and so forfeited all claim to the church's parsonage lands, which accordingly he resigned. 'And now,' says he, 'if you will choose me for your minister, as I am, I am willing to serve you; but I claim no right to IMPOSE a Calvinist minister upon a Socinian church.'—And pray, sir, did not this man act an honest part[n]?

n 'Did I therefore alter my notions as to *articles of faith*, which I had once subscribed, and came to perceive the falsehood of them, I would think myself obliged to follow the dictates of my own conscience, and would endeavour also by all due means to persuade the church to which I belonged to change their *faith* also. But if I were not able, it would be extremely foolish to fancy that they would act directly contrary to their own principles, in continuing me their minister, and endowing me

Authades, in another part of the Christian world, where Calvinism was the only established religion, in his youth, joined with the church where he lived; and publicly gave his assent, according to custom, to the articles of the Christian faith, as contained in their formula, which were strictly Calvinistical, although the church was grown very lax in examinations, without which, formulas, though never so good, will not answer the end. He did not believe their articles at the time, but it was for his credit to be a church-member; therefore he kept his infidelity to himself, and made a public profession. At length the minister, a good old Calvinist, died. The church and congregation invited Authades to be his successor. All the time he was on probation, his chief study was to conceal himself. For by this time, he began to be full in the Socinian scheme. He generally preached on moral subjects, as these gave him the largest scope for popular declamation, and the best advantages to hide his principles. If at any time he preached on *original sin, regeneration, justification, the satisfaction of Christ, or the influences of the Holy Spirit*, as he was obliged sometimes to do, to prevent their suspicions, he took the greatest care to express himself so, as that his secret sentiments should not be discovered by the people. However, some of the more judicious sort suspected him, and feared he meant to act a part. Nevertheless, a great majority invite him to settle, and he is ordained. He expressly covenants to preach to them according to their Calvinistic articles of faith; and on this condition, they engage to pay him 100*l.* per annum. He knew they would not settle him, if he did not delude them. And he still knows he cannot keep possession of the 100*l.* per annum, unless he can keep them deluded. Therefore he uses all his art to conceal himself from the congregation in general; and in the mean time, is usually cunning to make proselytes to the Socinian scheme, in a secret under-handed way. At length, having made a par-

with that salary, which they had allotted to a *pastor* that should teach them doctrines which I had found myself obliged to abandon. It were absurd to imagine that though *those who serve the altar should like the altar*, that yet I should live by an *altar* which I had abandoned, and set up one in opposition to, and indeed endeavoured to overthrow.' *Bells on Creeds.* p. 91.

ty he begins to take courage; and slily dresses up Calvinists as *bigots*, and *vital piety* as *enthusiasm*; and more openly declaims against *creeds* and *confessions*, as *impositions* and *engines of persecution*, the result of a *proud* and *domineering spirit*; and in a word, *the fatal source of all mischief*. For so they feel to him. For as *he that doth evil hateth the light*; so he that is an heretic hates orthodox creeds and confessions. Poor Authades! he knows very well, that if his church and congregation would strip off his false colours, and get legal proof of his true character, he must lose his 100*l.* per annum. He thinks it no roguery for him to impose upon his church, and cheat them out of their money, and out of their principles; but he thinks it would be a piece of the greatest tyranny, and the most cruel and barbarous persecution, if they should find him out, and prove him to be a Socinian, and, as such, have him silenced, and take away his 100*l.* per annum. Thus every man lives, and thus he dies; and to be sure, you will, candid Scripturista, join with me to look upon and abhor him, as a thorough practised knave.

For you grant, the Calvinistic church had 'a right to judge for themselves, what was the true sense of Scripture, and what principles were necessary according to the holy Scriptures, to be believed and professed, in order to be admitted to sealing ordinances, or to be employed as a public instructor.' And if they had a right to do so, their doing so was an *imposition* upon Authades; but Authades was the only man worthy of *imposition*. He *imposed* upon the church when he joined with it at first; he still in a higher degree imposed upon the church and congregation too, when he settled in the work of the ministry among them. He wanted their money. He obtained it first by dissimulation, and kept it through his whole life by one series of deceit.

And if Calvinistic churches in the Christian world, in this corrupt age, have reason to fear that there are too many of Authades' character, the very *wolves in sheep's clothing* our Saviour warned us to *beware of*, (*Mat.* vii. 15.) can you desire, that instead of obeying the divine counsel, they should tamely resign their 'right to judge for themselves,' and admit to sealing ordinances and to the work of the ministry, any that

offer, without any regard to their principles? And to suffer themselves to be imposed upon in the highest degree, to the great injury of themselves, and of their posterity, only to avoid the bitter resentments of such men as Authades, who will cry out, *Imposition! imposition! Persecution! persecution!* if you only insist on your right, as Christians, to know the articles of their belief, and refuse to admit them to communion and into the ministry, unless they appear to be sound in the faith? No, sir, you can, consistent with your own avowed principles, desire no such thing. But rather, as Christ has made it the indispensable duty of all his followers, openly to profess the doctrines of his holy religion, (Mat. x. 22. 32, 33.) charged them to *beware of false prophets,* (Mat. vii. 15.) and commended them for trying and detecting false pretenders, (Rev. ii. 2.) and as even common sense teaches, that the disciples of Christ have a natural right to know, and judge of the religious sentiments of those who claim to be their *fellow-disciples,* and expect to be treated as such; so instead of discountenancing the little concern of Calvinistic churches in the present day, to be consistent with yourself, you, who cannot bear to be thought not a Calvinist, ought rather to blame their too great indifference, and call upon them to awake, stand upon their guard, and watch, lest cunning deceitful men slily creep in, and before we are aware, bring *another gospel* into our pulpits, and the utmost confusion and discord into our churches. For how can we *walk together except we be agreed?* (*Amos* iii. 3.) Or keep the *unity of the spirit in the bond of peace,* except we have *one faith, one Lord, one baptism?* (*Eph.* iv. 3, 4, 5.)

But perhaps you will say, 'The Calvinists are too suspicious already. There are no Arminians, no Arians, no Socinians, &c. among us. The cry is raised by designing men, merely to answer political ends.' Oh, my good Scripturista! O, that this were indeed the case! O, that our fears were quite groundless! How soon would I believe it, if you could help me to 'see just reason for it.' But how would the party through New-England, laugh at our credulity in Connecticut, if their friends among us could make us believe all to be safe till they could carry their points here, as they have elsewhere.

In New-Hampshire province, this party have actually, three years ago, got things so ripe, that they have ventured to new-model our *shorter catechism*; to alter, or entirely leave out, the *doctrines of the Trinity*, of the *decrees* of *our first parents being created holy*, of *original sin*, Christ *satisfying divine justice*, *effectual calling*, *justification*, *adoption*, *sanctification*, *assurance of God's love*, *perseverance in grace*, &c. and to adjust the whole to Dr. Taylor's scheme. And in their preface to this new catechism, they tell the world, that 'The snarling of party bigots will be little regarded.' i. e. if all the Calvinists in the country are disobliged, to see their whole scheme given up, *they do not care*. They look upon us all, as *snarling bigots*, not to be regarded. This is honest: now they speak their hearts; and tell the world how they feel! Come from New-Hampshire along to Boston, and see there a celebrated D. D. the head of a large party! He boldly ridicules the doctrine of the trinity, and denies the doctrine of *justification by faith alone*, in the sight of all the country, in his book of sermons: come nearer home, come to Willingford; see there a young gentleman, bold to settle in the ministry, although opposed as an heretic by near half the town. Observe, and see how he conducts. How backward to let his people know his religious sentiments, while on probation! How resolved, never to be examined by the *consociation*, let it cost what it would, though charged with heresy, and cited to appear before them! Yea, although his opposers offer to accept him for their minister, if upon examination he should appear to be sound in the faith! And yet under these, even under these circumstances, he could find ministers to ordain him!

And how does this young gentleman conduct since his ordination? Does he convince the town that he is a sound Calvinist; as he might easily do, if he were? No, far from it. Yea, notwithstanding his opposers, (who, before his ordination, had offered to receive him for their minister, if upon examination by their consociation, he should be approved as sound in the faith,) now since his ordination renew the same offer: yea, are willing to leave it to another consociation, (viz. Hartford south,) then convened at Wallingford; and if they approve him, declare they will accept him for their minister:

yet Mr. Dana, refuses to do it! He had rather run the venture of all consequences, than to be examined by them! The town may break, himself be deposed, and non-communion be declared against him and his party: but let it cost what it will, he is resolved he will not be examined by them! But why? He knew the consociation *must* approve him as orthodox, if he appeared to believe our Confession of Faith. And thus the whole controversy might have been settled in an hour or two; which now is not likely to be settled these many years. And he knew it was no matter whether the consociation had jurisdiction or not, if both he and his opposers would agree to submit the affair to them. But he was resolved not to do it: and why all this, if he was a sound believer, I cannot conceive [o].

Nor is this all: for he has, since these things, even introduced *a new method of taking persons into full communion with the church.* A method, which, however suited to the *latitudinarian* scheme, yet is entirely subversive of the very foundation on which all our churches in New-England were originally settled. To be sure it appears so to me; and because I would fain know your opinion of it, I will relate the case, and state *three questions* for you to answer, in your next letter to your friend Paulinus. The case is this; the first church in Wallingford, under the Rev. Mr. Street, their first minister, were formed a Calvinistic church. The *doctrines of faith* which they drew up, to be used in the admission of members, were strictly Calvinistic. This form has been used, in that church ever since, in the admission of members. Their former ministers, having publicly read it before all the congregation, used to say to the persons to be admitted, *these articles of the Christian faith you give your assent unto.* Instead of which, Mr. Dana, their present minister, (if he may be so called after deposition,) says, "These articles of the Christian faith you give your assent unto, so far as you think them agreeable to the word of God." My *three questions* are these.

Quest. I. Does Mr. Dana, or his church, by such a profession as above, know what principles persons pretend to be of, whom they thus admit to special ordinances? Can they,

[o] For the facts above, the reader is referred to Mr. Bell's Remarks, &c.

by such a profession, know, whether they mean to be Papists, or Protestants, Socinians, Arians, Pelagians, Arminians or Antinomians? If they can, pray tell me how? For all these different denominations *believe*, and may *profess to believe*, these Calvinistic articles of faith, *so far as they think them to be agreeable to the word of God.*

But if by this profession you grant Mr. Dana, and his church, cannot form any proper judgment of the principles of those who are thus admitted, whether they are Papists, or Protestants, Socinians, Arians, &c. I would inquire,

Quest. II. Are Papists, Socinians, Arians, &c. all of them orthodox enough to be admited to sealing ordinances? If not—

Quest. III. How can Mr. Dana's conduct, in this affair, be vindicated, who receives members upon a profession, which any heretic in the Christian world can make, and still retain all his errors?

Will it do to say, in his excuse, 'That some of his church are attached to the Calvinistic scheme in which they have been educated; and will be offended if he lays aside their *old doctrines of faith*, and makes a *new creed* of a different stamp: and perhaps they may leave him, and join with those who have already rejected him. If he should discover his peculiar principles so plainly, perhaps he would soon have but few hearers. And so this will not do. "And it is right to dissemble a little in so good a cause." And besides, if he himself does not believe *their doctrines of faith*, it is a hardship, to oblige him to lead his people, from time to time, to profess, in the most public and solemn manner, their belief of them; and to keep back such from special ordinances, who scruple to make such a profession. To prevent all which difficulties, he first reads over *their old doctrines of faith*, for a *blind* to the Calvinist part of his church; and then he expresses himself so, as to leave those whom he admits, at full liberty to believe what they please, and yet be quite orthodox enough at the same time to be admitted into the church of Christ, as his true and faithful followers.' But if this be the case, does not one of our *former questions* need to be reconsidered, viz. 'Is it of any importance what men's princi-

ples be, if their lives are but good?' For if indeed *it is of no importance*, and if *pious frauds* are justifiable; then we may all do as Mr. Dana does. But if *it is of importance*, and if we must not dissemble, how can his conduct be justified? Or, how can any orthodox church in New-England safely receive members, by virtue of a recommendation from his church, as being sound in the faith, when it is not known what their faith is?

A speedy and full answer to these questions will greatly oblige,

Sir, your already very much obliged,
and very humble servant,

PAULINUS.

THE

HALF-WAY COVENANT:

A

DIALOGUE.

And look that thou make them after their Pattern, which was shewed thee in the Mount. JEHOVAH.

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: And, lo, I am with you. JESUS CHRIST.

A

DIALOGUE,

BETWEEN A MINISTER AND HIS PARISHIONER,

CONCERNING THE

HALF-WAY COVENANT.

PARISHIONER. SIR, I am dissatisfied with a part of your public conduct, and am come to open my mind freely to you, if you will be so kind as to allow me an opportunity.

MINISTER. Sir, I am now at leisure, and at your service, and your honest frankness gives me pleasure. Between you and me alone, to let me know the objections you have against any part of my conduct, is to act a friendly part. It is more kind and christian-like, than to keep your thoughts to yourself, to engender a secret disaffection in your heart. And you may be quite assured, that not only now, but in all future times, I shall with pleasure listen to any objections against my public administrations proposed in a friendly, candid manner; and will be ready to be set right, wherein I am wrong; or to let you know the reasons of my conduct. For, next to the light of God's countenance, and the approbation of my own conscience, I prize the good opinion of my fellow-men: and particularly, I greatly prize the testimony of the consciences of my own people in my behalf. To your conscience, therefore, I am now willing to approve myself.—Open your mind without the least reserve.

PAR. I have lately moved into the parish; I had owned the covenant in the town I came from; my other children have been baptised; we have now another child for baptism, and I hear you refuse to baptise the children of any but those who are in full communion. This gives me pain.

MIN. I cannot give you pain, without feeling pain myself. But you would not desire that I should go counter to the will of my LORD and MASTER, while acting in his name, as his minister; nor would this be a likely means to obtain a blessing for your child. And if I am warranted by the Gospel of Christ to baptise your child, you are very sensible my reputation, and every worldly interest, will join to prompt me to it. You will easily make a convert of me to your opinion, if you can point out one text of Scripture to justify that common practice.

P. I have not studied the point. I cannot mention any texts of Scripture; but it is the custom where I was born and brought up; and I knew not but that it was the custom every where, until I moved into this parish.

M. No, Sir, it is not the custom every where; it was not the custom where I was born and brought up; and there are many churches in the country that are not in the practice.—At the first settling of New-England, there was, so far as I know, not one church that allowed baptism to the children of any but those whose parents were one or both in full communion. About 40 years after the first church was formed, this custom was brought in by a synod that met at Boston, 1662. Many ministers and churches zealously opposed it at the time, and even to this day the custom is not become universal: and of late a considerable number of churches, who had adopted the practice have laid it aside. It is not practised at all in the church of Scotland, as I have been informed by a rev. gentleman of an established reputation, who has lately been invited, and who has removed from thence, to the Presidency of New-Jersey College. And it is certain the confession of faith, catechisms, and directory of the church of Scotland, make no mention of it: neither is the practice mentioned in the Saybrook platform, which has been generally received by the churches in Connecticut; for the council which met at Saybrook, did not see cause to adopt that practice, although it had been introduced by the synod at Boston.—But if you had not studied the point before you owned the covenant; and if you took it for granted, that it was right, merely from education; yet you are able to let me know in

what views, and from what views, and from what motives you owned the covenant: as I suppose you meant to act conscientiously.

P. It was the common opinion that none ought to join in full communion, and come to the Lord's table, but those that were godly, that had on a *wedding garment, lest coming unworthily, they eat and drink damnation to themselves*. But it was thought that graceless persons might own the covenant, and have their children baptised; and this was my opinion, and I acted on these principles.

M. Yes, Sir, and I suppose the generality of people in the country that own the covenant, in these times, act on these principles. But it was not so from the beginning. The synod in 1662, who first brought in the practice, were not in this scheme. It was known and owned, and publicly declared on all hands, in the time of it, "That the synod did acknowledge, that there ought to be true saving faith in the parent, according to the judgment of rational charity, or else the child ought not to be baptised [p].

P. But, Sir, I am surprised! Is this true? Was this really the opinion of those who first brought in this practice?

M. It is true, it was indeed their opinion, if we may give credit to their own declarations. No man who was for this practice, perhaps, was of more note than the Rev. Dr. Increase Mather, of Boston, who was a member of the synod, and afterwards wrote in defence of this practice; and no author can in more express language declare his sentiments. These are his own words, in a pamphlet, entitled, "A Discourse concerning the subject of Baptism, wherein the present controversies that are agitated in the New-England Churches, are from Scripture and reason modestly inquired into." p. 52, 53. "In the fifth place, it may be alleged, that the persons in question, either have to the judgment of charity, a justifying faith, or not. If not, they, and consequently their children, are not baptisable. If they have, then they are forthwith admissible to the Lord's supper. Answer.

p See A Defence of the Answer and Arguments of the Synod, &c. against the reply made by the Rev. Mr. John Davenport, Pastor of the Church at New-Haven. Preface, p. 23, 24.

"I. I do readily acknowledge, that as it is only a justifying faith which giveth right to baptism before God; so it is the profession or visibility of this faith, that giveth right thereunto before the church. Some have maintained that a *dogmatical historical* faith, or a faith of assent to the truth of the Gospel doth entitle to baptism. But the common protestant doctrine against the papists speaketh otherwise.—Though a man should believe all that the holy Scriptures say concerning God and Christ, yet, if he doth not consent with his heart, that this God shall be *his God*, and this Christ *his Saviour*, he hath not right to baptism in the sight of God; or if he doth not profess such a *consent*, (which is implied in the proposition before us, when it is said concerning the persons in question, that they *gave up themselves to the Lord*,) he cannot justly claim baptism. In most churches in the world, men own the creed, (called the apostles',) before baptism. Now therein they say, I believe in God, and not only I believe God, viz. with a faith of assent only in the understanding. Now to believe in God, implieth a *consent of the will*, choosing this God for my God. And considering that in baptism, there is a profession of repentance for past transgressions, and an engagement to walk in newness of life for time to come, (Mark i. 4. 2 Pet. i. 9.) and that it cometh in the room of circumcision, which was a seal of the righteousness of faith; (Rom. iv. 11.) and that thereby remission of sins is sealed. (Acts ii. 38.) Which remission is not promised to any faith but justifying; also that baptism is said to save. (1 Pet. iii. 21.) And they that are baptised are said to be in Christ. (Gal. iii. 27.) And to have communion with Christ in respect of his death and resurrection. (Rom. vi. 4, 5. Col. ii. 12.) I say, from these and many the like considerations, I am fully persuaded that it is not a mere historical, but justifying faith, which giveth right to baptism."

These are his words, and they are as plain and express as could be desired.

P. But if this was in fact the case, I cannot conceive what room there was for the half-way covenant! for such persons might consistently profess to comply with the whole covenant, and not stop half-way in practice, but come up to all ordinances.

M. You are right in this observation. Persons so qualified, who have been brought up under the light of the Gospel from their infancy, by pious parents, and godly ministers, and now adult, and become godly themselves, professing and practising accordingly, are, in a judgment of rational charity, as fit for the Lord's table, as to offer their children in baptism. Nor is it merely a privilege they may claim, to come to the Lord's supper along with their Christian brethren, and join with them in commemorating the death of Christ; but it is their indispensable duty. They are bound to do it by the express command of Christ. Luke xxii. 19. *This do in remembrance of me.* And to neglect it, is practically to renounce the authority of Jesus Christ. And is it right for ministers to teach the disciples of Christ to live in the breach of the least of his commands?

P. But what would Dr. Mather say to this?

M. You may hear, for these are his words: (p. 54.) "It will not follow that these persons are immediately to be admitted to the Lord's table, or to the privileges of full communion. For *more full and satisfactory evidences* of regeneration and of Christian proficiency, are requisite in order to admission to the Lord's table, than in order to baptism." And if you will read *Mather's Magnalia*, you will see that they insisted on *initial grace* in order to baptism, but supposed greater attainments necessary in order to the LORD'S supper. But if that command of Christ is binding on weak Christians, who are indeed real Christians: Luke xxii. 19. to say they are not to be admitted to the Lord's table, is to say, it is not lawful they should obey the command of Christ. So this half-way covenant, while it teaches for doctrine the commandment of men, sets aside the command of Christ.

P. I am in the same opinion; nor can I see any room for the half-way covenant on Mather's scheme. But I have heard that Stoddard's scheme favours the present practice.

M. This is a mistake. Mr. Stoddard of Northampton, never practised the half-way. i. e. he never admitted any to have baptism for their children, but those who were in full communion; and he expressly declares, that those who have been baptised in infancy, and owned their covenant, are oblig-

ed in duty to come to the LORD's table. Yea, he says, (Appeal, p. 30. edit. 2.) "It is a scandal if they do not, and the church may call them to an account for their neglect. It is a visible contempt cast upon the ordinance." He held the Lord's supper to be a converting ordinance. And that unconverted men, knowing themselves to be such, might lawfully come. And that it was as lawful to come to the Lord's supper as to baptism, p. 77.; so that there was no room for any half-way covenant or half-way practice, on his scheme: For unconverted men, knowing themselves to be such, may on his scheme come not only half-way, but to all ordinances, and to one as well as to another.

P. I never heard of these things till now, and I know not what to think or what to say. It seems as if the half-way covenant, and the half-way practice, could not be made consistent on any scheme.

M. If the covenant owned is the covenant of grace, and if the parent acts understandingly and honestly in the affair, he is a good man, he has a right before God to baptism for his children, and an equal right to the LORD's supper; yea, that command of CHRIST, in Luke xxii. 19. renders it his indispensable duty to attend the Lord's supper [q]. But if the covenant owned is not the covenant of grace, those who have owned it, have in the sight of GOD no right to either of those ordinances, which are seals of that covenant, and of no other: no more right than if they had given their assent to any chapter in the apocrypha. Did you never hear it observed and talked of, that those who own the covenant, make as full and large a profession as they who join in full communion?

P. Yes. And my former minister read the same covenant to such as owned the covenant, as he did to those that joined in full communion, word for word, only one did not promise

q Under the Jewish dispensation it was lawful for an Israelite, not hindered by any external impediment, voluntarily to absent himself from the passover, if he was ceremonially unclean. But under the Gospel, an Israelite indeed, of sufficient age and understanding, and not hindered by any natural impediment, may not voluntarily absent himself from the Lord's supper, unless disqualified by spiritual uncleanness, by his own personal wickedness unrepented of, or for which he has not made Gospel satisfaction. And such an one is equally unfit to offer his child in baptism. Num. ix. 13. Mat. v. 23, 24.

to come up to all ordinances, and the other did. And I must confess this sometimes stumbled me.

M. If you please, sir, I will repeat the covenant we use when any join in full communion, the same that was read to me by my minister, when I joined to the church about three and thirty years ago. A brief summary of it is this: "You do now in the presence of the dread Majesty of heaven and earth, and before angels and men, in the sincerity of your soul, avouch the Lord Jehovah to be your sovereign Lord and supreme Good, through Jesus Christ; and solemnly devote and give up yourself to his fear and service, to walk in all his ways, and keep all his commands, seeking his glory," &c. And is this more full and express than your former minister used when persons owned the covenant?

P. I think not; it is very much like it.

M. So far as I am acquainted, the forms in use all over the country, a very few instances excepted, are very much alike. The only difference of any consequence lies in practice: I think it my duty, in private as well as public, to explain the covenant, and to see to it, that persons understand it before they make it, and know what they are about to do, and are sufficiently instructed that it is a wicked thing to *lie to God with their mouths, and flatter him with their lips.*

P. Very well, sir, no doubt this is a minister's duty. But, alas! for me, I never knew what I was about, nor considered the import of the words I publicly gave my consent unto. I knew myself to be unconverted. I meant to own the covenant, as the phrase is, and have my children baptised; but I had no design to profess godliness, or to pretend a real compliance with the covenant of grace. This godly people may do: but it had been great hypocrisy in me to do it. To lie to men is bad, but to lie to God is worse. I supposed that owning the covenant, was what the unconverted might do.

M. How can a man that knows himself to be unconverted, dead in sin, and destitute of the grace of God, stand up before the whole congregation, and say, "I do now in the presence of the dread Majesty of heaven and earth, and before angels and men, avouch the Lord Jehovah to be my sovereign

Lord and supreme good, through Jesus Christ, and solemnly devote and give up myself to his fear and service, to walk in all his ways, and keep all his commands, seeking his glory?"

P. I freely own I knew not what I did, when I owned the covenant. But you hinted just now, that this is not the custom in all the churches where the half-way practice takes place.

M. I have heard of a few churches where the ministers have of late drawn up a new form for those who own the covenant, essentially different from that which is used when any one is admitted to full-communion; which new form designedly leaves out the covenant of grace, and contains a profession, which unconverted men may make, and yet speak true. And this, with greater propriety, may be called the half-way covenant, although indeed it does not go half-way, and gives no right to those ordinances which are seals of the covenant of grace. Besides, God never did propose any covenant to mankind but which required real holiness on man's part; and any covenant short of this is a mere human device. It is teaching for doctrine the commandment of men, directly contrary to the express orders of Jesus Christ to his apostles, and all their successors. Mat. xxviii. 20. *Teaching them to observe whatsoever I command you.* The covenant with Adam required perfect holiness, without any provision for pardon in case of transgression. The covenant at Sinai written on the two tables of stone, called *the tables of the covenant*, containing ten commands, according to our Saviour's interpretation, required them *to love God with all their heart, and their neighbour as themselves*, in which the sum of all virtue consists; (Mat. xxii. 37—40,) but, however, it made provision for pardon to the true penitent, through shedding of blood, but not for impenitent sinners. Lev. xxvi. 1 Kings viii. And it is acknowledged on all hands, Antinomians excepted, that repentance toward God, and faith toward Christ are required in the covenant of grace, as revealed in the Gospel. These ungracious covenants, therefore, are not from heaven, but of men.

P. My conscience is convinced. I am obliged to give up the half-way covenant; but it is with no small reluctance: for what will become of my child? must it remain unbaptised? I cannot bear the thought. What shall I do?

M. Is it lawful for a minister of Christ to baptise any one without a divine warrant?

P. No.

M. Is baptism, administered without a divine warrant, a likely means to do a child any good?

P. No. But where is your commission to baptise? and what is the tenour of it?

M. In Mark. xvi. 15, 16. *Go preach the Gospel to every creature.* Thus unlimited is the commission to preach the Gospel. *And he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved.* The faith which entitles to baptism is a saving faith. Accordingly, when the multitude were pricked at the heart, on the day of pentecost, Peter did not say, *own the covenant*; nor did he say, *join in full communion*; but *repent* first of all, and then *be baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus for the remission of sins.* Acts ii. 38. And with the same sacred regard to the divine commission, Philip said to the eunuch, *if thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest.* Acts viii. 37. And it is a settled point on all hands, that if parents have no right to baptism for themselves, their children can have no right on their account.

P. Is it lawful for me to join in full communion, when I know I have no grace? can I answer it to God?

M. You remember when the King came in to view the guests, he saw a man among them *not having on a wedding garment*, to whom he said, *friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment? and he was speechless.* To make a false and lying profession is inexcusable wickedness. It is true, there will be tares along with the wheat, but it is the devil sows them there, and not the servants. And if false brethren come into the church, they creep in unawares; they have no right to be there.

P. But does not my own baptism render me a church member, and entitle my child to baptism, although I am destitute of faith and repentance?

M. "Circumcision verily profiteth if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. For he is not a Jew that is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh." Rom. ii. 25. 28. One baptised in infancy, who in the sight of God practically renounces his baptism when adult, as all do who reject Christ and continue impenitent, is not considered by God as entitled to the blessings of the new covenant, but as under the curse of the law. "He that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him." John iii. 19. 36. And what right hath this man to the seals of the covenant of grace, in the sight of God, who is by Christ himself declared to be under condemnation and wrath?

P. Well, if I have no right to baptism for my poor child, I must be silent. But I wish it might be baptised.

M. Will you allow me to examine the earnest desire of baptism which you express?

P. I ought to be willing. I ought to know the motives that influence me: for God knows them, whether I do or not.

M. I am glad to see your mind so serious and candid. If this temper should continue, I should hope all your doubts would be removed. For I can tell you seriously, I am willing to baptise your child, provided you do understandingly and with all your heart desire it.

P. And do I not? I should be a cruel parent if I did not.

M. Baptism, you know, is administered *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* In baptism, therefore, you dedicate your child to God the Father, through Jesus Christ his Son, to be sanctified by the Holy Ghost; and so give up your child with all your heart to the Lord for ever to be educated for God, and to be for him, and for him alone, in time and to eternity. And do you love God to that degree, as thus to give him your child for ever? if so, why do not you give yourself to God, first of all? you love your child, but you love yourself better. First of all then cease to be cruel to your own soul; no longer practically renounce your own baptism, by turning your back on God and the Redeemer; but act up to its genuine import; give yourself to God,

through Jesus Christ his Son, that you may become the temple of the Holy Ghost; and thus ratify what your parents did for you, when they dedicated you to God in baptism.—This is that owning of the baptismal covenant which God requires at your hands. Then bring your dear child, and consecrate it to God in sincerity and truth. This is the way, the right way for a blessing. But if, instead of this, you are moved only by custom, by a sense of worldly honour, by pride and shame; and desire that holy ordinance to be administered to your child from unholy motives, as Simon Magus desired the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost to answer his carnal ends; God knows it, and all the world will know it at the day of judgment. Pray, how was it when your other children were baptised? and how is it in general to all appearance when people own the covenant and get their children baptised? are they brought up for God; or only to serve divers lusts and pleasures? Look through the country wherever you are acquainted; the youth learn to dress, to sing, to dance; but do their parents appear to understand that they have devoted them to God? and is this evidently their great concern to bring them up for God? But to leave others, and to attend only to your own heart; can it be true, that you have a heart to give your child to God, and yet not a heart to give yourself to him? think of it, my dear sir.

P. I must grant that it is absurd and inconsistent, for a parent to pretend to have a heart to give his child to God, and yet have no heart to give himself to him. But I do desire to give myself to God.

M. Pray, sir, what then hinders you from giving yourself to him? you may desire to escape everlasting misery, you may desire to be happy for ever, so Balaam did; self-love may excite to this, where there is no love to God in the heart: but if you love God so as to be willing to have him for your portion; if you love Christ so as to be willing to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow him; you may have your choice: you may do as you like: "come, for all things are now ready." And if you would now in fact make this choice, it would put an end to your present difficulties about your child. Nothing, therefore, can hinder the baptism of your

child, but your continuing to reject God and the Redeemer, by which you practically renounce your own baptism, and forfeit all the blessings of the covenant.

P. Shocking affair! my child unbaptised! none to blame but its own parents! what shall I do?

M. Is not God your Creator? are you not his by an original, absolute, entire right? is he not infinitely worthy of your supreme love? were you not in your infancy dedicated to him in baptism? and have you turned your back upon him to this very hour; and practically renounced your baptism in his sight? so that, dying in this state, your baptism will be of no advantage to you; you will perish among the uncircumcised, among the unbaptised, among pagans; as it is written, *he that believeth not shall be damned*, and *except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish!* and do you now inquire, what you shall do? ah, my dear sir! the answer is plain. *Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.* And thus at last comply with the import of your baptism, and become a disciple of Christ. "And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. But unto the wicked, God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes? or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" Psal. l. 16. Pray accept kindly this advice from one who is your friend, and who is bound by office to act an honest part with the souls committed to his charge.

P. I thank you, sir, for your fidelity, and ask your prayers: for the present, adieu!

M. I thank you for your kind visit. I ask the favour of another hour, when you are at leisure. I am always at your service; and might I be a means of your salvation, it would give me joy, while I live, and after I am dead, through eternal ages. I only add, if you will read what the late learned pious President Edwards wrote on the qualifications for Christian communion, printed at Boston; and the Rev. Mr. Green's pieces on the same subject, printed at New-York; you may in them see the truth confirmed, and objections answered more largely. And if after all you should desire further conversation on this subject, I will be ready to attend

whenever you will be so kind as to call upon me. Only come at all times, as you have at this, in a serious, friendly, candid spirit; remembering this is one of the most interesting, solemn, and important subjects. Adieu, my dear sir.

DIALOGUE II.

Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. PAUL.

Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. JESUS CHRIST.

PARISHIONER. REVEREND SIR, as you asked the favour of another hour, when I should be at leisure, I am now come to pay you a second visit, to let you know my sentiments plainly, and hope you will treat me with all the calmness and kindness you professed before.

MINISTER. I am ready to hear every thing you have to say.

P. I freely confess you made me say, and consent to every thing you chose I should say: and now I choose to turn the tables. And if you will be as condescending to me as I was to you, I doubt not but I shall easily gain my point.

M. I mean to be condescending.

P. You intimate there is no text of Scripture to justify the practice of those having children baptised, who do not come to the Lord's supper. Allow there is none, it does not in the least prove the point. I will as easily be a proselyte to your opinion, if you will point me a text of Scripture which saith that all who were baptised, or had their children baptised, came to the Lord's supper.

M. There are many things may be gathered from Revelation, which are not expressed in terms.

P. Very true; and I think equally on my side of the question as on yours. I remember you intimated before, that it was not the custom any where at the first settling this country, to baptise the children of any, only those who come to the Lord's table; and that it is not to this day the practice

of the church of Scotland; which I find is a mistake, as I am informed, upon good authority, that the church of Scotland ever did, and do to this day, baptise for those who do not come to the table. And am well knowing to the practice of the Presbyteries in this country, that they actually do baptise, for those who do not come to the table of the Lord.

M. Allow this to be so, it does not prove there is any half-way covenant.

P. It is readily allowed, and I believe generally, if not universally agreed, that there is no half-way covenant; Doctor Mather never supposed an half-way covenant. And I freely allow it is the duty of all to come to the Lord's table, whom the church will accept. But to oblige persons to that which we cannot convince them they may safely do, seems hard, and contrary, to that Christian spirit which the Gospel urgeth. Rom. xv. 1. We then that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak. Gal. vi. 2. Bear ye one another's burdens.

M. The Gospel every where urgeth condescension. But persons who in a judgment of charity are pious, are obliged by the express command of Christ. Luke xxii. 19. *This do in remembrance of me.*

P. I cannot believe the command of Christ obligeth any of his followers to do that which they in their consciences dare not attempt, under their then present circumstances. I believe it is their duty to come, but I believe they must first get their scruples removed; and I believe the church must allow them that privilege, which if they will not, in order to be consistent with themselves, they must proceed to excommunication; and I cannot see why the church must not proceed further, and excommunicate all baptised persons who neglect to come to the Lord's table; for they are all visible members of the church. A sad consequence, if it cannot be prevented.

M. To drive the point, will undoubtedly make sad work; but it will not do to tell persons they will be accepted of God, if they be not gracious; neither will it do for us to lead them to make a lying profession: nothing short of a gracious profession will give a person a right to the ordinances of the Gospel.

P. Sir, I allow what you say in part, and I do not know that any one pretends to the contrary; all are agreed in it, that no person ever can be accepted of God, and be finally happy, short of real holiness; but whoever thought, (unless it be some wild enthusiast,) that a person might not be exhorted to attempt to do his duty, unless he could do it perfectly? It seems the sentiments you advance amount to the same absurdity lately taught by a foreigner, that none but those who are gracious are to be urged to do any duty. And with regard to a lying profession, it seems your sentiments lead persons to it. For, according to you, those who make profession of real piety, have a right to the ordinance of God; and those whom the church receive on this foot, are really in covenant. So it is not grace which gives the right, but a profession: then if that profession is a false one, and the person who makes it is an hypocrite, a false profession, even a lie, brings a person really into covenant with God, and gives him a right to his ordinances. If I understand you, there cannot be any profession, only a lying one, unless persons are gracious. So a lying profession does bring persons visibly into covenant with God, or none are visibly in covenant with God, only those who are gracious. This I think is contrary to the divine declaration, and to all the divine conduct towards his covenant people. God allowed them to enter into covenant: God treated them as being in covenant: and declared they were in covenant, and accordingly had compassion on them, offered them special privileges and glorious means, that they might be trained up for his heavenly kingdom.

M. There seem to be some difficulties which I had not thought of; but is it not the covenant of grace which is to be owned?

P. Doubtless it is; no one dare deny it. Neither need they be led to give their assent to any chapter in the Apocrypha. No one disputes its being the covenant of grace; but by attending upon God's ordinances, they mean to confirm their belief of the truth of the covenant of grace, laying themselves under more solemn obligations to perform every duty.

M. I think it my duty in private, as well as in public, to explain the covenant, and to see to it, that persons under-

stand it before they make it, and to instruct them what a wicked thing it is to lie to God.

P. Very well, Sir; no doubt it is a minister's duty; and equally upon my principles as on yours. I thing it the duty of ministers to teach and instruct persons, and show them how duty is to be performed; but not teach them to neglect duty, if they cannot do it in a perfect manner. Men are no where in the bible forbid to enter into covenant, nor to be baptised, nor to attend the Lord's supper, nor to do any other duty, unless under some special circumstances; but abundantly required to do in a right manner every duty, the one as well as the other. But no special qualification is required of men to attempt to do duty, more under the New Testament than under the Old. All the congregation of Israel were required, except under particular uncleanness: and I cannot find any thing to the contrary under the New Testament. The Pharisees, and lawyers were blamed for rejecting the counsel of God, they not being baptised. (Luke vii. 30.) If it is the duty of all to be baptised, and to attend the Lord's supper, then it is the duty of ministers and churches to receive all those who visibly are qualified.

M. God never proposed any covenant to mankind, but what required real holiness on man's part. The covenant of grace requires repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

P. The covenant of grace requires real holiness, on mans part, for eternal salvation. Repentance and faith are absolutely necessary for salvation. But faith and repentance are not absolutely necessary to give persons a right to attend the means of grace; for those who have not true faith, are called upon to attend the means of grace. Though the objection may be made, that wicked men's prayers are abomination unto God, yet it is their duty to pray, as God commands all men. The Pharisees were blamed for praying in the streets, that they might have glory from men. But they were not blamed for praying; for ungodly men are blamed for not praying. Psalm xiv. 4. Isai. xliii. 22. So men are blamed for leaving off praying; (Job xxvii. 10.) hence it is their duty to pray under their circumstances. Real holiness is required on

man's part for salvation, but whether real holiness is required in order to enter into covenant, is another thing. God declares, (Lev. xxvi.) "that he would punish Israel because they had despised his judgments, and because their soul abhorred his statutes, (v. 44.) and yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them, for I am the Lord their God." Now I do not see, if persons may not enter into covenant only on the plan of being holy, why they must not be cast out on the plan of their being unholy; which is not done, as declared above, and in many other places. But God does really allow unregenerate men to be in covenant, and treats them as being in covenant: 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15. and the Lord God of their fathers sent them his messengers, rising up by times and sending them; because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. God does not declare the covenant void, but rather, he will keep covenant to a thousand generations. If men were not in covenant, they could not be cast out. But they really are in covenant, though unregenerate. For my own part, I freely confess I cannot find that the Scripture represents real holiness absolutely necessary, visibly to enter into covenant, and attend God's ordinances. I know many texts are mentioned, 2 Chron. xv. 15. is one; and all Judah rejoiced at the oath, for they had sworn with all their hearts, and sought him with their whole desire, and he was found of them, and the Lord gave them rest round about. Who can once suppose that this was done in a gracious manner by all the thousands of Judah, and Benjamin, and some of the other tribes? let us hear the covenant, and the truth will appear, ver. 12, 13. and they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers, with all their heart, and with all their soul—That whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman. Israel were fallen into idolatry, and Asa was reforming them. And they were required really to turn from the service of idols to the service of the living God, and this is what is required in the external covenant, viz. to break off from sin, and turn to God.

Another text is that, Acts viii. 37. *if thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest,* by which from the context there cannot be any more consistently understood than his belief, Jesus was the Christ the prophet had foretold, and that baptism was the way in which we are now to be visibly introduced into covenant with God. If the eunuch was a good man, it does not appear that Philip acted upon the plan to receive only good men, or that he could act upon the plan. Having no rule to determine by, we infer that what Philip acted upon, was the eunuch's giving his full assent that Jesus was the Christ.

M. We do not mean to act upon the plan of *knowing* whether men are gracious or not.

P. I cannot say what you mean; but what you say seems to imply it; if you mean they should make no higher profession than we do, why do you tell them, they have no right unless they are gracious? We require persons to make profession of their belief of the Christian religion, their assent to the glorious doctrines, acknowledging their obligations, determining to be faithful according to them. Upon which profession you will receive them, if they will tell you they believe they are gracious. I cannot find any such rule; I wish they were all gracious, and that we had good evidence to believe they were.

M. Is baptism, administered without a divine warrant, a likely means to do a child any good?

P. No, Sir; nor with neither, only as it brings a child visibly into covenant with God, and so puts it into the way of covenant mercies: unless you hold it to be regeneration.

M. But you remember the commission?

P. Yes, Sir; but I think you have not rightly represented it. The commission at large is, Mat. xxvii. 19. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Thus unlimited was their commission to teach and baptise. That in the 16th. of Mark, doubtless means the same thing. Ministers are to instruct persons in the Christian religion and to baptise them. But you do not consider baptism as included in the commission, *Go preach the Gospel to every creature.*

You say, thus unlimited is the commission to preach the Gospel. *And he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved.* You say, the faith which entitles to baptism, is a saving faith. It is quite beyond me how you get this consequence. I imagine you may as easily get another, viz. That baptism is saving. *He that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved.* It is here declared that true faith is absolutely necessary for salvation; but baptism is not. Persons who are never baptised may be saved. The faith here, that Christ speaks of, is not that merely which entitles to baptism, but that which entitles to eternal life, which is clear by the opposite. *He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.* The text does not say, *He that believeth not, and is not baptised, shall be damned;* but *he that believeth not, shall be damned.*

M. You remember when the king came in to see the guests, how he treated the man who had not on a wedding garment?

P. Yes, sir; and readily allow that God will act as the searcher of hearts, at the great day of judgment, and will punish every one who is not found having on the righteousness of Christ.

M. Do look through the country, and observe the conduct of those in the present practice of owning the covenant, and getting their children baptised; are they brought up for God? the youth learn to dress, to sing, and dance, but do their parents appear to understand that they have devoted them to God?

P. Verily, sad and awful is the case, dreadful the neglect, and parents will have an awful account to give. But, pray, sir, can you give me any better account, where churches have practised on the other plan? Hath it appeared that parents have been more faithful to bring up their children for God? And hath it had any better effect; if it hath, it is an argument in your favour; if not, the contrary; it must be an argument against you. Instance the parishes, we may appeal to all who have been acquainted, whether parents have not apparently taken, at least as great pains to instruct and educate their children; and that as many at least have been trained up for God, under the former practice as under

the present. What great benefit then upon your plan? Surely none. But suffer me to mention one disadvantage; the peace of the church is greatly disturbed: which seems to be the chief effect of warm controversies: therefore I wish you gentlemen ministers would treat the subject calmly, if you cannot be persuaded to neglect the controversy. For I tremble to think of the awful consequences, and pray God to prevent them, by leading his churches into the way of all truth. I confess my difficulties are rather increased than diminished, and must think the present practice, well attended to, will be most for the general good. I know some difficulties may be proposed in either practice: but I think contention is best to be left off before it be meddled with, and hope you will join issue with me to drop the affair, as I have no design of engaging in the controversy. In the mean time I earnestly wish to see men truly concerned about the great things of another world, to see ministers and churches joining harmoniously, to spread far and wide the honours of the Lamb that was slain, but is alive for evermore, that God may be glorified, the churches have peace, and be edified. Adieu, dear Sir.

A PARISHIONER.

POSTSCRIPT.

P. Sir, if I mistake not, you represent it to be a new thing to allow baptism to the children of any but those whose parents, one or both, were in full communion, brought in forty years after the first church was formed, by the synod met at Boston in the year 1662. The Rev. Dr. Increase Mather gives us a very different account in the book you quoted. He mentions the opinion of many of the most pious and godly ministers who came over into this country at the first settling of New-England. Mr. Cotton, Mr. Hooker, and Mr. Stone, who came in the same vessel in the year 1633, all freely give their opinion, that children, whose parents are baptised, have a right to baptism, who are in covenant until they

are cast out. Mr. Cotton, minister of the first church in Boston, says, in a letter dated in the year 1634, (which was before 1662.) we may not account such parents for Pagans and Infidels, who are themselves baptised, and profess their belief of the fundamental articles of the Christian faith, and live without notorious scandalous crimes, though they give not clear evidence of their regenerate state. In the year 1635, came over, Mather, Norton, and Shepherd. Three extraordinary men; each give their opinion in the affirmative. In the year 1636, came Patrick and Rogers, Mr. Smith of Weathersfield, Mr Prudden of Milford, and many others, all in the affirmative. So the congregationalists at home, Dr. Owen, Dr. Holmes, and others. From which it appears, that it was no new thing for persons in covenant to have their children baptised, if they did not come to the table. And I think many of their arguments unanswerable. P.

DIALOUGE III.

PARISHIONER. SIR, this third visit I am come to make you, for I have lately read a piece printed at New-London, entitled, "A Dialogue between a minister and his parishioner, concerning the half-way covenant, continued;" said to be written by one of the most learned and ingenious ministers in the colony. I hope therefore, now if ever, by the assistance of such a patron, to be able to carry my point. Instructed by him, I give up the half-way covenant; I grant there is but one covenant. I give up the half-way practice too, as founded only in ignorance, and the mistaken notions of the vulgar. I am convinced, that he that is qualified to have his children baptised, is equally qualified to come to the Lord's table. I come therefore to claim baptism for my child, and a place at the Lord's table for myself, as my proper right. p. 6. However, I am not well pleased at the publication of our discourse in my first visit, although I must confess you have given a fair representation of what passed, because being very dull at that time, I make but a very indifferent figure in the eyes of the public. p. 2.

MINISTER. Be comforted, my friend; no blame is laid on you by the public. I bear it all; and I am willing to bear it for your good: and methinks you have only cause of joy and thankfulness; for to be convinced so soon of your mistake, is no small favour. No doubt the voice of the clergy, who practise the half-way, declaring as one man, that he who is qualified to offer his child to baptism, is equally qualified to come to the Lord's table, has wrought your conviction; for your former faith and practice were grounded merely on the custom of the country: this led you to think that the Lord's supper was more holy than baptism. But while you hear all the ministers, with whom you converse, declare they mean no such thing; they practise the half-way only in condescension to the ignorance, and groundless unscriptural scruples of the common people; you are convinced; you give up the point; you own the command of Christ, *do this in remembrance of me*, is binding on all his disciples: but, pray, upon what grounds, do you now so boldly claim baptism for your child?

P. Although I was "uncommonly dull and muddy," in my first visit; yet, "you know, sir, what I wanted was to have my child baptised. As you told me there was but one covenant, so we were agreed that I had entered into that covenant, the very same covenant that you entered into three and thirty years ago, when you was admitted into the church. And, sir, why may I not have the seal of it set upon my child?" p. 4.

M. Did not I expressly tell you, that "If the covenant owned is the covenant of grace, and if the parent acts understandingly and honestly in the affair, he is a good man; he has a right before God to baptism for his children, and an equal right to the Lord's supper? But that if the covenant owned is not the covenant of grace, those who have owned it, have in the sight of God no right to either of those ordinances, which are seals of that covenant, and of no other: no more right than if they had given their assent to any chapter in the Apocrypha.?'

P. True, you did so; and there is but *one covenant*, says my patron.

M. This covenant then is the covenant of grace, which, we are all agreed, requires repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ: or else there is no covenant of grace at all; for he says there is but one. But lay your hand upon your heart, and tell me the truth honestly, did you mean to profess repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, when you owned the covenant? or in other words, did you mean to profess a compliance with the covenant of grace? Pray, sir, recollect and repeat the very words you spake to me in your first visit.

P. You make me blush; for I told you the truth in my first visit, from the bottom of my heart; and this is what I said: I "knew myself to be unconverted; I meant to own the covenant, as the phrase is, and have my children baptised; but I had no design to profess godliness, or to pretend a real compliance with the covenant of grace. This godly people may do, but it had been great hypocrisy in me to do it. To lie to men is bad, but to lie to God is worse. I supposed that owning the covenant was what the unconverted might do." These were my very words: and on these principles I acted, as do all others that I am acquainted with, who own the covenant, have their children baptised, and do not come to the Lord's table; and I verily thought this was right before my first visit.

M. How is it possible a man so honest as you *then* appeared to be, should *now* act such a dishonest part, as you have done? It is my duty, as a minister of Christ, to rebuke you sharply; for *then* you told me, as you *now* own, that you did not mean to profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, upon which I denied baptism to your child; and yet *just now* you pretended you did mean to do it. You have need to blush; this deliberate dissimulation in such an affair, is no small crime. Did your learned patron advise you to this step, to get your child baptised? Is this the way to obtain God's blessing?

P. Be this as it may, I am willing now to make a profession, and publicly to enter into covenant with God, and I have no objection against the form used in your church. I can make

that covenant, and speak truly in the sight of God, notwithstanding I know I have no grace. p. 6, 7.

M. How can a man who knows he has no grace, profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, without wilful lying?

P. I do not mean to make a profession that shall imply conversion. There would be 'special hypocrisy' in doing so. p. 14.

M. What then? do you suppose the unconverted do comply with the covenant of grace? That the unconverted have repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ? That the unconverted choose the Lord Jehovah for their sovereign Lord, and supreme good through Jesus Christ, and give up themselves to his service, to walk in all his ways, seeking his glory?

P. No, sir, by no means. But "if it be true that the Lord Jehovah is my sovereign Lord and supreme good through Jesus Christ, i. e. if it be true, that he who through Christ is the author of being, and of every mercy to all the living, is the sovereign Lord and supreme good of every living soul, it is no harm to avouch it." I mean to give my assent to this truth, and no more.

M. Doth not the devil believe the truth of this proposition as firmly as any wicked man does? and is he in covenant? You have need to be better instructed about the nature of entering into covenant with God, before you can be considered as qualified in point of doctrinal knowledge.

P. No, sir, I am not so ignorant, neither. I know in what sense you mean to understand your covenant. But knowing myself to be unconverted, I cannot profess a compliance with the covenant of grace in that sense. I cannot profess supreme love to God, and that I do actually take him as my God, my chief good, through Jesus Christ. This is not in my heart. Therefore I mean to adopt the words of the covenant in a different sense; even in the sense in which an unconverted man who is at enmity against God may use them, and yet speak true.

M. But this is not to profess a compliance with the covenant of grace. And therefore should you make it, it could give you no right to sealing ordinances for yourself or your

child. Rather is it gross and scandalous dissimulation, very much like what is practised by Arians and Socinians among the clergy of the church of England, when they subscribe the thirty-nine articles, in order to qualify themselves for a benefice upon the establishment; which practice is condemned by all honest men.

P. Be this as it may, I can at least with moral sincerity promise, "to walk in all his ways and keep all his commands, seeking his glory." p. 7.

M. The obedience engaged by one who professes a compliance with the covenant of grace, is that kind of obedience which the covenant requires, viz. an holy obedience, an obedience which proceeds from faith and love. And do you mean to engage this?

P. No, by no means. I only mean to engage what an unconverted man may do, while such. p. 7 [a].

M. But this unholy obedience is not that kind of obedience which the covenant of grace requires at your hands. So that you mean to profess neither to comply with the covenant of grace at present, nor to live such a holy life as it

a Other writers maintain, that such as know themselves to be unconverted, when they join in full communion with the church, are to engage that very kind of obedience required in the covenant of grace, from that time and forward till they die. They are not to profess that they have as yet loved God, believed in Christ, repented of their sins, or lived holy lives; but they are to engage that they will do all this as soon as ever they have joined with the church, and from that time forward till they die. This is Mr. Beckwith's scheme, answer to Mr. Green, p. 26. If these professors are so near being converted in their own judgments, really and honestly, that they do expect to be actually converted as soon as they have joined with the church, it is a pity they do not put off their public profession till the next sabbath; and so be converted first: and then they might make a full profession of a present compliance with the covenant of grace, and so the whole controversy might be ended. This is always the way that honest people take when they enter into the marriage covenant, to which this writer compares this transaction. They do not come and present themselves before the priest to enter into the marriage covenant, till they begin to love each other. And now they can with a good conscience give their consent to the whole marriage covenant, as being conscious to themselves that they already have such an heart in them. But should a pair offer to be married, who had, through their whole courtship, and to that moment, been at enmity against each other, as much as Paul declares every *carnal mind* to be *against God*, (Rom. viii. 7.) it would be looked upon as a hypocritical, mad, and stupid piece of conduct.

requires for the future. In short, you mean to use the words of a saint with the heart of a hypocrite; and so to come into Christ's visible church with the language of a friend, but with the heart of an enemy. Your proposed conduct may serve to give a very true and just exposition to those words of our Saviour, *Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?* As if he had said, "I call you friend, because you, in words, make the same profession which my real friends do. But why do you do this, when at the same time you have the heart of an enemy? why do you act this hypocritical part? Such dissimulation is *special hypocrisy.*" If you could not comply with our covenant in its plain sense, and in the sense you knew we understood it, why did not you rather come like an honest man, and say so, and desire to have it laid aside; and a new covenant, an ungracious covenant, introduced in its room; a covenant which you could make, and act an honest part?

P. I thought there was but one covenant. I supposed the covenant you use in your church, as you understand it, was that one covenant. I thought that baptism and the Lord's supper were seals of the covenant of grace, and of no other. And so I must profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, or I cannot be received among Christ's disciples, or claim the privileges of such. Therefore I put this new sense on the words, that I might consent to them with a good conscience.

M. But the words, in this new sense, are not the covenant of grace, but an ungracious covenant; in sense and meaning exactly like the half-way covenant, in use in some churches, where they have two covenants, (a number of such churches I could name to you,) so while you cry out against the name of a half-covenant, you take the covenant of grace, and turn it into the very thing, in order to bring it down to a level with your graceless heart; and then put on a bold face, and come and claim the privileges peculiar to those who profess a compliance with the covenant of grace itself.

P. Sir, "I am persuaded God has made the Lord's supper a converting ordinance to many, and he may make it so to me." p. 9.

M. And, O my friend, will you dissemble in this shocking manner, in order to get into the church, that you may come to the Lord's table, and be converted! Is this what you mean by *moral sincerity?* I tell you with that plainness that becomes my office, that to come thus, is not the way for a blessing, but for a curse. For *he that eateth and drinketh unworthily*, instead of being in the way of a blessing, exposes himself to the righteous judgment of God; agreeable to the apostle's words to the Corinthians.

P. Nay, sir, the Corinthians "turned the Lord's supper into a feast of Bacchus." And what is this to me? p. 14.

M. Is not deliberate, designed dissimulation, in the most solemn, religious transaction on earth, even in covenanting with the great God, as bad as drunkenness?

P. Nay, sir, but I am expressly commanded to come to the Lord's supper, by Christ himself. p. 15.

M. This command was given to none but Christ's disciples. And in the apostolic age none ever pretended to attend the Lord's supper, but those who had made a profession, and were admitted into the Christian church. As yet you have not made a profession, to be sure, not such a profession as God ever required; nor is the profession you now propose to make, a profession of a compliance with God's covenant, even with the covenant of grace.

P. "I am able to demonstrate, as clearly as any theorem is demonstrated in Euclid, that if an unconverted man may not avouch the Lord for his God, nor resolve to obey him, he may not say, *Our father which art in heaven; forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.*" p. 8. And it is damnable heresy to teach that the unconverted ought not to pray. p. 9. And if they sin in praying, yet it is less sin to pray than not to pray. p. 12.

M. It is a greater sin to lie than to do nothing. Lying is not a means of grace. Lying is not an appointed means of conversion. There are many things unconverted sinners may say to God, and speak true. To speak the truth to God is well: Jam. ii. 19. but to say that which they know is not true, is a thousand times worse than to say nothing. Mat. xxiii. 14. Acts v. 3. And for a man who is sensible that it

is not in his heart to forgive those who have trespassed against him, and that in fact he does not forgive them, to come into the presence of God, and pray, saying, *Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,* is implicitly to ask God not to forgive him; but this is a greater sin than not to pray at all, as all will allow; and it will hold true, as true as any "theorem in Euclid," that lying is worse than nothing, in praying, in covenanting, and in every thing else.

P. Sir, on your plan three quarters of the Christian world will be shut out of the church. p. 14.

M. Were it not better, were it not more for the honour of Christ and Christianity, in the sight of Pagans, Jews, and Mahometans, and in the sight of the ungodly in Christian countries, and more for the good of their own souls, that nine tenths should be shut out of the church, if need so require, than to come in by wilful lying! But for a man to profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, when he knows he has no grace, is no better; and yet without such a profession no man can visibly enter into covenant with God. For God has no other covenant extant, of which baptism and the Lord's supper are seals; for there is but one covenant, as you allow; and to use the words of this covenant in such a sense as to make it a graceless half-covenant, gives no more right to sealing ordinances, than to repeat any chapter in the Apocrypha.

P. If your scheme "should prevail, it would bring back the country into the ancient state of heathenism [b]."

M. And pray, sir, who do you think will have the hottest hell, a heathen who dares not lie, or a Christian who allows himself to lie in the most solemn religious transactions? or which will be the likeliest to be converted by the preaching of the Gospel?

P. "When men of sense and conscience find themselves denied the enjoyment of ordinances for themselves and children in our churches," they will turn to the church of England [b].

M. No man of sense or conscience will desire to make a lying profession to get his children baptised; he would ra-

[b] Mr. Beckwith.

their they never should be baptised than do such a wicked deed. And we stand ready to baptise the children of all, who can, understandingly and honestly, make that profession which God requires.

P. "Christ's visible kingdom requires in its members qualifications like itself, viz. those that are visible and knowable." p. 16.

M. And we, in receiving them, act entirely on what is visible, viz. on their public profession, attended with an answerable conversation, just as they did in the apostolic age.

P. "Every baptised person is a member of Christ's visible church: but I was baptised in my infancy, therefore I have a right to all the exernal privileges of a church-member." p. 16.

M. You remember the answer I gave to this at your second visit, viz. "Baptism alone, in the apostolic age, never made any adult person a church-member without a profession; profession was first made, and then they were baptised. Those therefore that are baptised in infancy, in order to be members in this sense, must make a profession when they become adult. The New-England churches, therefore, are right in demanding it."

P. You must then have a half-covenant for these half-members.

M. No, by no means. They are bound by their parents' act and deed to comply with the covenant of grace itself, as soon as they become adult. With this covenant, and with this alone, do we urge them to comply. Whenever they appear to do it, we receive them to full communion. But if they openly renounce the God of their fathers, and obstinately persist in it, they must be considered and treated as persons who have visibly renounced their baptism, in which their parents devoted them to God through Jesus Christ, to be for ever his.

P. "It is certain that the Gospel contains no rule whereby to determine with any certainty that a man is gracious." And therefore your scheme cannot be acted upon. p. 9, 10.

M. It is equally certain the Gospel contains no rule to determine with certainty that men are orthodox, or sound in the faith. They may make an orthodox profession, but we cannot be certain that they mean as they say. To be sure, if they

allow themselves to use orthodox words in a heterodox sense, as you do in the business of covenanting; and the truth is, let the qualifications be what you please, it is not necessary the church should have a certainty that the candidates for admission to sealing ordinances, have them really and in the sight of God. It is sufficient, on every scheme, that they appear to have them, to a judgment of charity, regulated by the word of God.

P. Such inconsistency may by no means be charged on the Deity, as to institute an ordinance with a design that never can be carried into execution; as is the case, if Christ has not given some infallible criterion, or mark, whereby to know who may be admitted. p. 9, 10.

M. Very well, sir, be pleased to take the inconsistence to yourself, until you can be infallibly certain, that the candidate for admission is really orthodox and morally sincere in the sight of God, as searcher of hearts. And in order to this, you will need the aid of that enthusiastical sort of people of whom your minister speaks; (p. 10.) for it cannot be known, without an immediate revelation. You must get their *spirit* to come and tell you, whether men are as orthodox and morally sincere in the sight of God, as they profess to be before men. For there is no infallible mark whereby you can certainly know it. An immediate revelation is absolutely necessary for this, "as I am able to demonstrate as clearly as any theorem is demonstrated in Euclid."

P. Be this as it may; whether the church must be certain or not; yet we ourselves must be certain, that we have the necessary qualifications, or we must not come. p. 10.

M. We are naturally as conscious of volitions as of speculations, of love as of belief, whenever we look into our own hearts, as all will allow. A man whose mind is wavering between Arminianism and Calvinism, inclining sometimes to one side from the corrupt biasses of his heart, and sometimes to the other by the force of evidence, may not be able to say which he believes. So a man whose mind is wavering between God and Mammom, inclining sometimes to one master with a view to his future interest, and sometimes to the other from an attachment to his present, may not be able to

say which master upon the whole he chooses; for *the double minded man is unstable in all his ways.* But Christ does not desire men to make a profession of being his disciples till they have sat down and counted the cost, and are come to a settled determination; as is plain from Luke xiv. 25—33. And when men are come to that settled determination, which our Saviour there describes, they may say that they have come to it. And this is all the profession which we desire.

P. Thus far I have acted the part of a disputant, and I have now done. Suffer me therefore once more to reassume that honest character which I sustained in my first visit; for let others say what they will, I design to act an honest part. Now the truth of the case is this, I am not specially concerned to know by what rule the church must be governed in admitting members; neither am I concerned to know what they must do who are in doubt about themselves: the only question about which I am exercised, relates to my own particular case. I know I have no grace. I know I am unconverted. I told you so at first, and so I have told all the ministers with whom I have conversed; and how any man, that knows he has no grace, can profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, and speak true, I could not understand, years ago. It was this that induced me to own the covenant, as the phrase is, and not to join in full communion, that so I might have my children baptised. Not one of the ministers with whom I have conversed, appears to justify the principles upon which I acted; but all as one man, say, there is but one covenant, and this one covenant is the covenant of grace: indeed, they explain away the covenant of grace, till they bring it down into a graceless covenant, and then tell me I can comply with that, and ought to do so, and thus join in full communion. But you have fully convinced me of the inconsistence and absurdity of this; and yet I would beg leave to inquire, why might not the covenant of grace be voted out by the church, and a graceless covenant be substituted in its room? and then such as I am could consistently profess a compliance with such a covenant, and have baptism for their children.

M. But if a church should vote out the covenant of grace, or, which is the same thing, in other words, should vote out Christianity, how could it any longer be considered as a visible church of Christ, or as having a visible right to the visible seals of God's covenant? And besides, should you bind your child to one of your neighbours, to learn some mechanic art, why, in this case, might not the covenant be sealed, ratified, and confirmed by the administration of baptism, *in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?*

P. The proposal shocks my mind. It would be a profanation of God's holy ordinance, to take God's seal, appropriated to God's covenant, and put it to man's covenant.

M. But this ungracious covenant is man's covenant, and not God's. And to take God's seal, appropriated to God's covenant, even to the covenant of grace, and apply it to a covenant which God never made, to a covenant made by men, is to profane the holy ordinance; and knowingly to profane God's holy ordinance, is not a duty, nor is this to put ourselves in the way of a blessing.

P. What need is there of any covenant at all?

M. It is not the manner of men to put a seal to a clean piece of paper. Nor did God ever appoint seals to be put to a blank. God's seals were appointed to be put to God's covenant; and we have no right to put them to a blank; and besides, it would be to give up the import of the actions, and to render sealing ordinances unmeaning, empty, useless ceremonies.

P. What shall I do?

M. *Repent and believe the Gospel.* Thus preached John the Baptist: thus preached Jesus Christ; and thus his apostles. And therefore, being emboldened by their examples, I say unto you, *Enter in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

P. I thank you, sir, for your kind and friendly instructions. I ask your prayers.—I must go.

M. I will detain you but a minute longer. You remember your former minister, the author of the second Dialogue *concerning the half-way covenant*, said, "There is no half-way covenant. Doubtless it is the covenant of grace. No one disputes its being the covenant of grace; no one DARE DENY IT." And your present patron says much the same. You remember also, that in your second visit, I told you, that to say this, was implicitly to "yield up every point for which we contend;" and, in this view, I added, "nor do I doubt, if this controversy should go on, it will soon appear, that there is *one who dares deny it*. For otherwise all men of sense will see, that gentlemen on that side of the question are grossly inconsistent with themselves." And now it hath come to pass, that one of the most discerning gentlemen on that side of the question, has published a laboured piece, to prove, that in order to enjoy sealing ordinances for ourselves and our children, we are not to profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, but only with a graceless covenant. This therefore is the only point that needs to be settled, in order to settle the whole controversy; to this point, therefore, I advise you to give a most serious attention. For, if it can be proved that baptism and the Lord's supper are seals of the covenant of grace, and not of a graceless covenant, *the axe will be laid to the root of the tree*. Attend, therefore, to the subject with the utmost impartiality, that you may obtain not only light in your head, but also reap saving advantage to your soul. I have known some Christless sinners, by the means of this controversy, awakened to a greater concern about their eternal salvation than ever they were before. And, be assured, sir, that the truths of the Gospel, if they are not unto your own soul *a savour of life unto life*, will be *a savour of death unto death*. Eternity, an endless eternity, lies before you. You have slept secure in sin long enough; it is high time you should awake. Every circumstance of your own soul, and every circumstance of your dear offspring, calls upon you without delay to awake, and turn to God through Jesus Christ, in sincerity and truth. O, what joy would it give me, ere long to admit you into full communion with the church, on a profession of a compliance with the

covenant of grace, in which you should appear to act understandingly and honestly! That salvation may thus come to you and to your household, may God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ.

My dear sir, farewell.

DIALOGUE IV.

A reply to the parishioner's letter, concerning qualifications for Christian communion; printed at New-Haven.

PARISHIONER. SIR, three times I have been with you heretofore, to get my child baptised; and I am now come to make you a fourth visit, with the *letter* lately printed at New-Haven, in my hand.

MINISTER. I am willing, sir, and ever have been, to oblige you in all things wherein I lawfully may. And particularly, I am willing to baptise your child, if you really, understanding the true import of the action, are willing to offer your child in baptism; even to *dedicate it to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;* in whose name it is to be baptised. But, if you do indeed love God so well, as that you are willing to give him your child, to be his for ever, why are you not as willing to give him yourself? And why should you not, first of all, give yourself up to God through Jesus Christ; and then, after that, give your child to him? In this way God will become your covenant God and Father in this world, and your eternal portion in the next. *This is* all I wait for. And this is what I have, from the beginning, been urging upon you, as your immediate, indispensable duty. You remember what I said to you in your first visit, "if you love God so as to be willing to have him for your portion; if you love Christ so as to be willing to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow him; you may have your choice: you may do as you like: *come, for all things are now ready.* And if you would now in fact make this choice, it would put an end to your present difficulties about your child. Nothing,

therefore, can hinder the baptism of your child, but your continuing to reject God and the Redeemer, by which you practically renounce your own baptism, and forfeit all the blessings of the covenant." And you remember my parting words in your last visit, "every circumstance of your own soul, and every circumstance of your dear offspring, calls upon you without delay, to awake, and to turn to God through Jesus Christ, in sincerity and truth. O, what joy would it give me, ere long, to admit you into full communion with the church, on a profession of a compliance with the covenant of grace, in which you should appear to act understandingly and honestly!" And you are my witness, that at all times I am ready to instruct you, to pray for you, and if need be, to rebuke you with all tenderness and kindness.

P. Inspired by the spirit which runs through the New-Haven *letter*, I must say, that I despise your rebukes, p. 4. and do not desire your prayers. p. 18. "Could I sufficiently dissemble, I should *give you joy*, and gain a speedy, easy admittance into your church;" p. 10.—but, for my part, I look upon you as little or nothing better than the very worst of heretics. For "your principles, sir, are too near of kin to those most shocking principles lately broached in the land, by several who have a fondness for being authors; particularly by Mr. Sandeman, and Mr. Hopkins. Mr. Sandeman says, that *faith is obtained, as the most remarkable discoveries have been obtained, the use of the magnet, Jesuit's bark, and many chymical discoveries; i. e. not when these things, but something else, was looked for.*—Mr. Hopkins says, *it is indeed, as great an absurdity as can be thought of, to suppose that the corrupt, vicious heart, does any thing towards becoming holy, &c. for all the exercises and volitions of the corrupt unregenerate heart are certainly the exercises of sin.*"

"These principles, sir, I look upon of the most dangerous tendency, of any that were ever broached in the Christian world, deism itself not excepted." p. 20.

M. My dear sir, be cool, and think a minute or two who you are, and what you say, and what you have been doing. You are my parishioner. In this character you have made me three visits before this. In this character you are now talk-

ing with me. You knew my principles before you ever desired me to baptise your child. And you knew that the church under my care profess to be in the same scheme of religion with me. And would you desire that your child should be baptised by the worst of heretics! Or would you desire to join with such a church! Where is the honesty or consistence of your conduct! You are inspired with a spirit, indeed; but I fear you *know not what spirit you are of.*

As to our sentiments touching *total depravity, works done by unregenerate men,* and the *sovereignty of divine grace in the conversion of sinners,* we profess to agree with the *Assembly of divines at Westminster.* And you know, that their *confession of faith,* and *larger* and *shorter catechisms* are adopted by the church of Scotland, as their test of orthodoxy; and are much the same with the *Savoy confession of faith,* which is adopted, in general, by the churches in Massachusetts and in Connecticut. But,

These public formulas declare, as to *total depravity,* that "we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil." And as to *works done by unregenerate men,* that "although for the matter of them they may be things which God commands, and of good use to themselves and others; yet because they proceed not from a heart purified by faith, nor are done in a right manner, according to the word, nor to a right end, the glory of God; they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God. And yet their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing to God." And, as to the *divine sovereignty in the conversion of sinners,* they say, that "all those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased in his appointed and accepted time effectually to call, &c. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from any thing at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call," &c.

And the famous Mr. Stoddard, in his *Treatise concerning the Nature of Conversion,* says, p. 7. "If men do not act from gracious motives, and for gracious ends, they do not the thing that God commands; there is no obedience to God in what

they do: they do not attend the will of God." And, p. 9. "There is an opposition between saving grace and common grace; common graces are lusts, and do oppose saving grace. Making his own salvation his end, is contrary to making the glory of God his last end: hating sin, not because it wrongs God, but because it exposes him, is resisting the command of God: bringing every thing into subserviency to his own ends, is opposite to the bringing every thing into a subserviency to God's glory. The man that hath but common grace, goeth quite in another path than that which God directs unto: when he goeth about to establish his own righteousness, he sets himself against that way of salvation which God prescribes. Rom. x. 3. There is an enmity in the ways of such men as have but common grace, to the ways that godly men take." Thus Mr. Stoddard.

And now, my parishioner, I appeal to you, to judge whether these quotations, out of the confession of faith and Mr. Stoddard, "are not as near of kin to those shocking principles, which you look upon of the most dangerous tendency of any that were ever broached in the Christian world, deism itself not excepted," as any thing I ever advanced from the pulpit or the press.

And if some of the important doctrines of Christianity are more obnoxious to you than deism itself; that is, if you are nearer a deist than you are a Christian; certainly you are not fit to be a church-member, or to offer your child in baptism, or to partake of the Lord's supper, according to your own principles. For you say, that men must be orthodox. And you cannot deny, that the church of Scotland, and the churches in New-England, have as good a right to judge for themselves, what principles are agreeable to the word of God, and of importance to be professed, as you have to judge for yourself. We are willing, that those who look upon the doctrines contained in our public formulas, as being worse than deism, should hold communion among themselves, but we think it an inconsistence in them to desire to be members of our churches.

P. 'Unholy obedience is a contradiction in terms; for holiness and obedience are the same thing.' p. 8.

M. In saying this, you condemn Mr. Mather's scheme of an external graceless covenant, by wholesale. However, strictly speaking, what you say is true. And in this view Mr. Stoddard's words are exactly right, (speaking of the unregenerate,) 'There is no obedience to God in what they do.' And thus it is said by the church of England, in her 39 articles; 'Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his spirit, are not pleasant to God. Yea, rather, for that they are not done as God hath commanded and willed them to be done, we doubt not but that they have the nature of sin.' See article 13. Do you, sir, believe this?

P. No; far from it. Rather I believe that 'all the obedience of an unconverted man is holy obedience.' Yea, I believe, that 'the obedience of an unrenewed man, so far forth as it is obedience, is as holy as any that a gracious man can yield. Though it is but a partial and imperfect obedience, yet just so much as there is of obedience, just so much holiness. And, 'a measure of strength is given him by God, to walk in all his ways and keep all his commands,' seeking his glory.' p. 8, 9. And in any other view I must acknowledge, that the unconverted covenanter would be 'perjured.' For, *to swear to obey a covenant which we cannot obey, is perjury.* And therefore, had the unconverted no power to yield a holy obedience, it would be perjury in them to enter into covenant engagements to do it. p. 8.

M. If I understand you right, and you are in earnest in this declaration, then you believe that the unconverted are, in a measure, really holy. And therefore, are not totally depraved, as is asserted in the Confession of Faith adopted by our churches. And if this be so, then you are not sound in the faith. And those who are not sound in the faith, have no right to church privileges, according to your own principles. You, therefore, cannot consistently claim church privileges of any of our churches. Indeed, you may think our Confession of Faith not agreeable to the word of God, and you may think the same of the articles of the church of England: if, therefore, you would act a consistent part, you should join, neither with us nor them; but rather form a new church, on a new plan, with those who think as you do. For it is ab-

surd for those who differ in essentials, to walk together as brethren. And to profess our belief of articles of religion, which we do not believe, for the sake of church privileges, is as gross dissimulation in the laity among us, as it is in the clergy in England, who subscribe the 39 articles of that church, in order to enjoy a benefice, when they do not believe them, as in the case with the Arians, Socinians, and Arminians, among them. In a word, if you really disbelieve the doctrines of *total depravity*, and of *divine sovereignty*, you can by no means consistently join with us.

P. 'These principles deny the present state of the unregenerate to be a state of probation: they deny him to be a moral agent: they deny the justice of punishment for any sin.' p. 21.

M. So says Dr. Taylor, so says Dr. Whitby, so says Dr. Stebbins, and all other Pelagian and Arminian writers I ever read. They all agree, that the doctrines of *total depravity* and of *divine sovereignty*, as held by the Calvinists, are absolutely inconsistent with moral agency. They have said it a thousand times, and they have been answered as often. Thus stands the controversy. "Because I have no heart to love God, therefore I cannot be bound in duty to love him." "Because I am *dead in sin*, and opposite to all good, therefore that law which says, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things*, cannot justly reach me." "Because we all, with one consent, excuse ourselves from coming to the Gospel feast; therefore we are not in a state of probation." "Because God says, *may I not do what I will with my own?* therefore, we may say, we are not in duty bound, to regard his law, or hearken to his Gospel." Reasoning, which if it has weight in it, proves the fundamental maxims of the bible to be false; for that book teaches, that we may be *dead in sin*, and yet *deserve to be damned* for that sin: that God is not *obliged* in justice, or by promise, to grant converting grace to any impenitent sinner; and yet it is the duty of such sinners *every where to repent*. But you may, at your leisure, see my sentiments on these subjects at large, and my confutation of Mr. Sandeman's scheme of religion, both at once, in a book lately printed at Boston, entitled, *An Essay on the Nature and Glory of the Gospel*. However,

I will readily grant, that there is an absolute necessity of denying total depravity on the one hand, or of giving up the covenant of grace, and substituting a graceless covenant in its room, on the other hand; in order to open a door for the unconverted, as such, to enter into covenant with God, and join in full communion with the church, consistently with truth and honesty. But, yet so it happens, that on either plan men cannot consistently be admitted into our churches. For, if they deny total depravity, they must be deemed not sound in the faith, according to our approved standard; and therefore, must not be admitted. And if they substitute a graceless covenant in the room of the covenant of grace, they go off from the plan on which our churches were originally founded; and so, consistently, cannot be members of them. We must have a new confession of faith, and a new plan of church order, and form new churches, before either of these ways will answer the end. Besides, if the unconverted have a degree of real holiness, and do, though in an imperfect manner, yet really comply with the covenant of grace, then the unconverted are, in fact, entitled not only to the seals, but also to all the blessings of the covenant of grace; even to pardon, justification, and eternal life. Than which nothing can be more contrary to the whole tenour of Scripture, which every where declares all such to be under the wrath of God, and curse of the law, condemned already, liable to be struck dead and sent to hell at any moment. John iii. 18. 36. Gal. iii. 10.

P. The unconverted Israelites made a profession of the very covenant you plead for; and why cannot we? p. 28.

M. You can, if you will, do as they did, viz. *flatter him with your mouth, and lie unto him with your tongues.* But then you ought not to take it ill, if the true nature of your conduct is, from the word of God, set in a clear light before you.

P. But I do take it ill; indeed I do. Particularly the rebuke you gave me for dissimulation, in my last visit, I do not take well at your hands. For I am not the guilty man. p. 3.

M. The man I rebuked for dissimulation, was my parishioner, whose conversation with me was printed in the New-

Haven *Dialogue*; and who, in his first visit, told me 'that he did not mean to profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, when he *owned the covenant*.' On which I let him know, that he, for that very reason, had no right by virtue of that profession, to claim the seal of the covenant of grace for his child. For this very same man afterwards came again to me, to baptise that very same child, and put on a bold face, and declared, that "he had entered into that covenant," and therefore had a right to the seal of it.

P. "I shall not trouble myself to defend this parishioner against the charge of dissimulation." p. 4. But I am not the same man. p. 3.

M. If you are not the same man, why do you take the charge of dissimulation to yourself *now*? Or why did you pretend to be the same man *then*? Why did you call yourself by the same name? And why did you begin with me in these words? "Sir, I find the dialogue which passed between us the other day is printed." Is it not evident, by this, that you intended then, that I should consider you as the very same man? but no sooner do I find you contradicting yourself, and rebuke you for it, but you cry out, "this dialogue did not pass between you and me." To use your own words, sir, "it is easy to see your unlucky mistake." And "it is really pleasant enough" to see you drove to a necessity of changing your name, in order to get rid of the fault, which otherwise you must, even in your own judgment, be reputed guilty of. We have heard of men's changing their names when pursued for their crimes, that they might avoid their pursuers; but did you before now ever hear of a parishioner, that went to his minister to get his child baptised, that did so?

P. Be this as it may, the grand question is this, viz. "Can a man, who knows he has no grace, profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, without wilful lying?" p. 5. You say he cannot: I say, he can.—Indeed, once I was of your opinion; and this was the reason I did not join in full communion; but I am of another mind now. And I can, though I know I have no grace, yet make a profession of a compliance with the covenant of grace, as honestly as any man. And to charge any one with wilful lying for this, is virtually to charge the ministers and churches through the land with that horrid crime. p. 3.

M. As this is a matter of importance, it deserves to be thought of seriously, and to be thoroughly looked into. And if you will be serious only long enough to understand the proposition, you will be forced to believe it. For,

By the covenant of grace, we mean that covenant which promises pardon and eternal life to those who comply with it. By a compliance with it, we mean, saving grace; i. e. such gracious exercises as are infallibly connected with salvation. Such as *repentance toward God*, and *faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*, which imply supreme love to God and Christ in their very nature, and a cordial disposition to a life of sincere obedience to all God's commands [d]. By one who has no grace, we mean one who is entirely destitute of this repentance, faith, love, and new obedience, which are connected with eternal life; being *dead in sin.*

When therefore it is said, that "a man, who knows that he has no grace, cannot profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, without wilful lying;" the truth of the proposition is as evident, as when it is said, that "a man who knows that two and two are but four, cannot say, that two and two are five, without wilful lying." And therefore, as soon as the proposition is understood, it cannot but be believed. There is no way to avoid it. For,

1. If you explain down the covenant of grace into a graceless covenant, with which a graceless heart may really comply, it will not help your cause in the least. For if a graceless heart may comply with this graceless covenant, yet it still remains a self-evident truth, that a graceless heart doth not comply with the covenant of grace. Or,

2. If you represent an unconverted graceless man, as not being *dead in sin*, and *without strength*; but as really having a degree of spiritual life, and spiritual strength, and spiritual

d A saving compliance with the covenant of grace, is what does not in the least degree take place in the unregenerate, but does actually take place in all true believers. For although it implies saving grace, yet it does not imply perfect holiness. Those, therefore, who are true believers, may make a profession honestly; but those who are not, cannot. To say, that a true believer cannot make a profession honestly, because he is not perfectly holy, supposes that a saving compliance with the covenant of grace implies perfect holiness. Which is not true, as is granted on all hands.

ability to yield holy obedience to all God's commands; and so as complying with the covenant of grace, in reality, though but in an imperfect degree, it will not help your cause at all. For this graceless man, so called, is in fact a gracious man, and is entitled not only to the seals, but also to the blessings of the covenant of grace. Because he does, in fact, comply with it. Rather it runs you into the absurdity of saying that some unconverted, graceless sinners, are real converts and true saints, and have a title to eternal life, i. e. of expressly contradicting yourself. Or,

3. If you say, "a graceless sinner may comply with the covenant of grace, with moral sincerity, though not with gracious sincerity:" it will not help your cause. For there is but one kind of real complying with the covenant of grace; and this entitles to eternal life. For he that really complies with the covenant of grace, doth, in so doing, act graciously. Thus, he who loves God supremely with moral sincerity, does love God supremely, in reality; but this real supreme love to God is a gracious and holy love to God. And you have already said, "that obedience to God is always holy," "and the obedience of the unrenewed, as holy as any that a gracious man can yield." p. 8. But if so, then this obedience is performed with gracious sincerity, as really as the obedience of any gracious man is. But, if your graceless man does comply with the covenant of grace, in a gracious manner, he will go to heaven along with true saints. And, therefore, that saying of our blessed Saviour is not true—"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

It remains, therefore, that this proposition must pass for a self-evident truth, which cannot but be believed, as soon as it is understood, viz. "A man who knows he has no grace, cannot profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, without wilful lying." You may as well say, that *black is white*, or that *a dead man is alive*, or that a *graceless sinner is a real saint*, as say, that "a man, who knows he has no grace, can profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, honestly and with a good conscience." And, therefore, a man must either not know what he is about, or his conscience must be

very much seared, or he will not dare to profess a compliance with the covenant of grace while he knows he has no grace. Indeed, it is a full proof that a man is to a great degree destitute of moral honesty, if, with his eyes open, he dare to make such a profession. It is at least as gross wickedness as that which Annanias and Sapphira were guilty of, in saying, *This is all the money*, when they knew that *it was not all*. They *lied to the Holy Ghost*, and this man flatters God with his mouth, and lies unto him with his tongue. Psal. lxxviii. 36.

To be consistent, therefore, we must vote the covenant of grace out, in our church, and vote in a graceless covenant in its room, or you cannot be admitted as a member. And if we should vote out the covenant of grace, and vote in a graceless covenant in its room, we should, so far as this vote should have influence, cease to be a visible church of Christ. Nor should we have a visible right to baptism and the Lord's supper, which are seals of the covenant of grace, and of no other covenant. For there are but two covenants which now take place between God and man, viz. the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace. Rom. iii. 27.

P. I am not able to think of this seriously, and to answer it honestly. I have no other way therefore to get rid of the truth, but to misrepresent and ridicule it. p. 5—9. However, I have two objections against this scheme, viz. 1. The church cannot know who do really comply with the covenant of grace. p. 16. Nor, 2. Can any join with the church but those who have full assurance[e]. p. 19.

e Obj. Baptism alone makes me a church-member, or it does not. If it does, then I have a right to the Lord's table: if it does not, then the church have no right to discipline me.

Ans. If baptism alone gives a right to the Lord's table, then all baptised persons in Christendom, young and old, good and bad, the excommunicated not excepted, have an equal right: which none will grant. And if the church have no right to discipline any but those who have a right to come to the Lord's table, then they have no right to discipline any who are guilty of heresy or scandal; for such have no right to come to the Lord's table. The objection is founded on two propositions, both of which are false, even in the judgment of the objector. viz. 1. That baptism alone gives a right to the Lord's table, without any other qualification whatsoever: upon which rule, even the excommunicated cannot be

M. You may find a full answer to these objections in what I have already published on this subject, which you appear not to have attended to. But pray, what rule would you have the church proceed by in the admission of members? Would you have *certain evidence*, that the candidates for admission have the requisite qualifications insisted on by the church?

P. Yes, indeed. For, 'this is my principle, that every man, (asking special ordinances,) is as CERTAINLY qualified to partake of the Lord's supper, as he is to breathe, unless there is CERTAIN EVIDENCE that he is disqualified." p. 16.

M. But one, who is at heart a deist, and who lives secretly in adultery, may, to answer political ends, "ask for special ordinances," and there may be no "certain evidence" of his crimes. Therefore, according to this NEW DIVINITY, this infidel, this adulterer, is as certainly qualified to partake of the Lord's supper, as he is to breathe."

P. Shocking consequence! However, this I lay down for an infallible truth, that all who have visibly entered into covenant, as I have done, "to walk in all God's ways and to keep all his commands," are bound by their own vow to attend special ordinances. p. 10, 11, 12.

M. What! Bound, though they know themselves to be unqualified? Is the abovementioned infidel and adulterer bound? What! bound in the sight of God, and a well-regulated conscience, to come to the Lord's table, as he is? Pray, who bound him? God never did; nor does the vow he publicly made to "walk in all God's ways, and keep all his commands," bind him to come *as he is*. For this is what God *never commanded*.

And it is equally evident, that God never commanded men to make a lying profession in any instance, either verbally or practically. But to seal a covenant is, (practically,) to profess a compliance with it. To seal a covenant, therefore, with which we know we do not comply, is what God, *never*

debarred. 2. That the church have no authority to exercise discipline over any but those who have a right to the Lord's table: upon which rule, those who are disqualified for the Lord's table, by heresy or scandal, are not subjects of discipline.

commanded. Yea, it is what God has forbidden in every text in the bible which forbids lying. So that, if the covenant to be sealed in baptism and the Lord's supper, is the covenant of grace, as you allow it is, then those who know they have no grace, are forbidden to seal it, by every text in the bible which forbids lying. And therefore, that command, *do this in remembrance of me,* is beyond all doubt, a command which respects believers, and them only; agreeable to the publicly professed belief of the church of Scotland, and the churches in New-England, held forth in their public formulas. Indeed it is the duty, the indispensable duty of every one to whom the Gospel comes, and their highest interest, to comply with the covenant of grace, and that on the very first invitation. As soon as the glad tidings come to our ears, *come, for all things are now ready, whosoever will let him come;* we ought not to delay a moment, we ought not to make one excuse, we ought not to feel the least reluctance: no, rather on the contrary, we ought, with Peter's hearers, *to receive the word gladly,* that same day, and to make a public profession and join with the church the first opportunity. Mat. xiii. 44.—And to neglect this, is a sin so great and aggravated, as to expose the neglecters to be given up to God in this world; Luke xiv. 24. and to be cast off for ever in the world to come. Mark xvi. 16. So that your mouth is stopped, and you stand guilty before God. But, to return to a consideration of your visible standing. Pray, sir, was you esteemed a church-member, in full communion, in the town where you lived before you moved into this parish?

P. No, sir, by no body. I never looked upon myself to be a church-member, in this sense of the phrase. I never meant to join with the church, nor did the minister or the church mean to receive me as a church-member, and accordingly, I never met with the church when they had church meetings upon church business. I never staid when the church was desired to stay, as they sometimes were, after worship on sabbaths, and at other times. I never voted when the church were called to give in their vote in any matter whatsoever. Nor had I any right to go to the Lord's table without making a public profession over again, and

thereby *joining with the church*, as the common phrase was. No such thing was allowed where I was brought up. So that I did not think myself a church-member before I moved into this parish, nor was I esteemed and used as a church-member. Yea, it never entered into my heart, to pretend any such thing, till my New-London patron taught me to say so, and to put in these high claims, and to deny my old principles, and contradict myself, and finally, even to deny my own name, and pretend to be another man. And since then I have felt "BRAVELY," and have looked down upon you with great contempt.

M. The more men mock God in religion, the more proud, haughty, and insolent, are they apt to be towards their fellow men. A religion begun in ignorance like yours, and carried on and perfected in this shocking manner, if it may do to live with, yet will not do to die by.

P. Be this as it may; yet to say as you do, "better do nothing than lie," tends to increase the number of prayerless persons, and prayerless families, to put an end to all means, and in the end to overthrow all religion. p. 20.

M. Doth not God himself say, Eccl. v. 5. *Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay*; i. e. in other words, "better do nothing than lie." And will you condemn the Holy One of Israel? Either give up the bible, or abide by its sacred maxims. Besides, there is a difference between *covenanting transactions* and *common means*. And accordingly, Christ ordered his ministers to *preach the Gospel to every creature*; but he did not order them to *baptise every creature*. For,

Graceless sinners may hear the Gospel preached, may hear all the truths and duties of it explained, proved, and urged; and may attend, yea, may be very attentive, and meditate on them day and night, till they *are pricked at the heart*; they may forsake vain and vicious company, become sober, serious, deeply distressed about their eternal welfare. They may spend much time in secret prayer, *(and an awakened sinner cannot fail to do it,)* and frequently spend whole days in fasting and prayer, as Mr. Brainerd used to do, under his terrors, when he was unconverted; pray read his life: I say,

"I. I do readily acknowledge, that as it is only a justifying faith which giveth right to baptism before God; so it is the profession or visibility of this faith, that giveth right thereunto before the church. Some have maintained that a *dogmatical historical* faith, or a faith of assent to the truth of the Gospel doth entitle to baptism. But the common protestant doctrine against the papists speaketh otherwise.—Though a man should believe all that the holy Scriptures say concerning God and Christ, yet, if he doth not consent with his heart, that this God shall be *his God*, and this Christ *his Saviour*, he hath not right to baptism in the sight of God; or if he doth not profess such a *consent*, (which is implied in the proposition before us, when it is said concerning the persons in question, that they *gave up themselves to the Lord*,) he cannot justly claim baptism. In most churches in the world, men own the creed, (called the apostles',) before baptism. Now therein they say, I believe in God, and not only I believe God, viz. with a faith of assent only in the understanding. Now to believe in God, implieth a *consent of the will*, choosing this God for my God. And considering that in baptism, there is a profession of repentance for past transgressions, and an engagement to walk in newness of life for time to come, (Mark i. 4. 2 Pet. i. 9.) and that it cometh in the room of circumcision, which was a seal of the righteousness of faith; (Rom. iv. 11.) and that thereby remission of sins is sealed. (Acts ii. 38.) Which remission is not promised to any faith but justifying; also that baptism is said to save. (1 Pet. iii. 21.) And they that are baptised are said to be in Christ. (Gal. iii. 27.) And to have communion with Christ in respect of his death and resurrection. (Rom. vi. 4, 5. Col. ii. 12.) I say, from these and many the like considerations, I am fully persuaded that it is not a mere historical, but justifying faith, which giveth right to baptism."

These are his words, and they are as plain and express as could be desired.

P. But if this was in fact the case, I cannot conceive what room there was for the half-way covenant! for such persons might consistently profess to comply with the whole covenant, and not stop half-way in practice, but come up to all ordinances.

M. You are right in this observation. Persons so qualified, who have been brought up under the light of the Gospel from their infancy, by pious parents, and godly ministers, and now adult, and become godly themselves, professing and practising accordingly, are, in a judgment of rational charity, as fit for the Lord's table, as to offer their children in baptism. Nor is it merely a privilege they may claim, to come to the Lord's supper along with their Christian brethren, and join with them in commemorating the death of Christ; but it is their indispensable duty. They are bound to do it by the express command of Christ. Luke xxii. 19. *This do in remembrance of me.* And to neglect it, is practically to renounce the authority of Jesus Christ. And is it right for ministers to teach the disciples of Christ to live in the breach of the least of his commands?

P. But what would Dr. Mather say to this?

M. You may hear, for these are his words: (p. 54.) "It will not follow that these persons are immediately to be admitted to the Lord's table, or to the privileges of full communion. For *more full and satisfactory evidences* of regeneration and of Christian proficiency, are requisite in order to admission to the Lord's table, than in order to baptism." And if you will read *Mather's Magnalia*, you will see that they insisted on *initial grace* in order to baptism, but supposed greater attainments necessary in order to the LORD's supper. But if that command of Christ is binding on weak Christians, who are indeed real Christians: Luke xxii. 19. to say they are not to be admitted to the Lord's table, is to say, it is not lawful they should obey the command of Christ. So this half-way covenant, while it teaches for doctrine the commandment of men, sets aside the command of Christ.

P. I am in the same opinion; nor can I see any room for the half-way covenant on Mather's scheme. But I have heard that Stoddard's scheme favours the present practice.

M. This is a mistake. Mr. Stoddard of Northampton, never practised the half-way. i. e. he never admitted any to have baptism for their children, but those who were in full communion; and he expressly declares, that those who have been baptised in infancy, and owned their covenant, are oblig-

ed in duty to come to the LORD's table. Yea, he says, (Appeal, p. 30. edit, 2.) "It is a scandal if they do not, and the church may call them to an account for their neglect. It is a visible contempt cast upon the ordinance." He held the Lord's supper to be a converting ordinance. And that unconverted men, knowing themselves to be such, might lawfully come. And that it was as lawful to come to the Lord's supper as to baptism, p. 77.; so that there was no room for any half-way covenant or half-way practice, on his scheme. For unconverted men, knowing themselves to be such, may on his schme come not only half-way, but to all ordinances, and to one as well as to another.

P. I never heard of these things till now, and I know not what to think or what to say. It seems as if the half-way covenant, and the half-way practice, could not be made consistent on any scheme.

M. If the covenant owned is the covenant of grace, and if the parent acts understandingly and honestly in the affair, he is a good man, he has a right before God to baptism for his children, and an equal right to the LORD's supper; yea, that command of CHRIST, in Luke xxii. 19. renders it his indispensable duty to attend the Lord's supper [q]. But if the covenant owned is not the covenant of grace, those who have owned it, have in the sight of GOD no right to either of those ordinances, which are seals of that covenant, and of no other: no more right than if they had given their assent to any chapter in the apocrypha. Did you never hear it observed and talked of, that those who own the covenant, make as full and large a profession as they who join in full communion?

P. Yes. And my former minister read the same covenant to such as owned the covenant, as he did to those that joined in full communion, word for word, only one did not promise

q Under the Jewish dispensation it was lawful for an Israelite, not hindered by any external impediment, voluntarily to absent himself from the passover, if he was ceremonially unclean. But under the Gospel, an Israelite indeed, of sufficient age and understanding, and not hindered by any natural impediment, may not voluntarily absent himself from the Lord's supper, unless disqualified by spiritual uncleanness, by his own personal wickedness unrepented of, or for which he has not made Gospel satisfaction. And such an one is equally unfit to offer his child in baptism. Num. ix. 13. Mat. v. 23, 24.

to come up to all ordinances, and the other did. And I must confess this sometimes stumbled me.

M. If you please, sir, I will repeat the covenant we use when any join in full communion, the same that was read to me by my minister, when I joined to the church about three and thirty years ago. A brief summary of it is this: "You do now in the presence of the dread Majesty of heaven and earth, and before angels and men, in the sincerity of your soul, avouch the Lord Jehovah to be your sovereign Lord and supreme Good, through Jesus Christ; and solemnly devote and give up yourself to his fear and service, to walk in all his ways, and keep all his commands, seeking his glory," &c. And is this more full and express than your former minister used when persons owned the covenant?

P. I think not; it is very much like it.

M. So far as I am acquainted, the forms in use all over the country, a very few instances excepted, are very much alike. The only difference of any consequence lies in practice: I think it my duty, in private as well as public, to explain the covenant, and to see to it, that persons understand it before they make it, and know what they are about to do, and are sufficiently instructed that it is a wicked thing to *lie to God with their mouths, and flatter him with their lips.*

P. Very well, sir, no doubt this is a minister's duty. But, alas! for me, I never knew what I was about, nor considered the import of the words I publicly gave my consent unto. I knew myself to be unconverted. I meant to own the covenant, as the phrase is, and have my children baptised; but I had no design to profess godliness, or to pretend a real compliance with the covenant of grace. This godly people may do: but it had been great hypocrisy in me to do it. To lie to men is bad, but to lie to God is worse. I supposed that owning the covenant, was what the unconverted might do.

M. How can a man that knows himself to be unconverted, dead in sin, and destitute of the grace of God, stand up before the whole congregation, and say, "I do now in the presence of the dread Majesty of heaven and earth, and before angels and men, avouch the Lord Jehovah to be my sovereign

Lord and supreme good, through Jesus Christ, and solemnly devote and give up myself to his fear and service, to walk in all his ways, and keep all his commands, seeking his glory?"

P. I freely own I knew not what I did, when I owned the covenant. But you hinted just now, that this is not the custom in all the churches where the half-way practice takes place.

M. I have heard of a few churches where the ministers have of late drawn up a new form for those who own the covenant, essentially different from that which is used when any one is admitted to full-communion; which new form designedly leaves out the covenant of grace, and contains a profession, which unconverted men may make, and yet speak true. And this, with greater propriety, may be called the half-way covenant, although indeed it does not go half-way, and gives no right to those ordinances which are seals of the covenant of grace. Besides, God never did propose any covenant to mankind but which required real holiness on man's part; and any covenant short of this is a mere human device. It is teaching for doctrine the commandment of men, directly contrary to the express orders of Jesus Christ to his apostles, and all their successors. Mat. xxviii. 20. *Teacking them to observe whatsoever I command you.* The covenant with Adam required perfect holiness, without any provision for pardon in case of transgression. The covenant at Sinai written on the two tables of stone, called *the tables of the covenant*, containing ten commands, according to our Saviour's interpretation, required them *to love God with all their heart, and their neighbour as themselves*, in which the sum of all virtue consists; (Mat. xxii. 37—40,) but, however, it made provision for pardon to the true penitent, through shedding of blood, but not for impenitent sinners. Lev. xxvi. 1 Kings viii. And it is acknowledged on all hands, Antinomians excepted, that repentance toward God, and faith toward Christ are required in the covenant of grace, as revealed in the Gospel. These ungracious covenants, therefore, are not from heaven, but of men.

P. My conscience is convinced. I am obliged to give up the half-way covenant; but it is with no small reluctance: for what will become of my child? must it remain unbaptised? I cannot bear the thought. What shall I do?

M. Is it lawful for a minister of Christ to baptise any one without a divine warrant?

P. No.

M. Is baptism, administered without a divine warrant, a likely means to do a child any good?

P. No. But where is your commission to baptise? and what is the tenour of it?

M. In Mark. xvi. 15, 16. *Go preach the Gospel to every creature.* Thus unlimited is the commission to preach the Gospel. *And he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved.* The faith which entitles to baptism is a saving faith. Accordingly, when the multitude were pricked at the heart, on the day of pentecost, Peter did not say, *own the covenant*; nor did he say, *join in full communion*; but *repent* first of all, and then *be baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus for the remission of sins.* Acts ii. 38. And with the same sacred regard to the divine commission, Philip said to the eunuch, *if thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest.* Acts viii. 37. And it is a settled point on all hands, that if parents have no right to baptism for themselves, their children can have no right on their account.

P. Is it lawful for me to join in full communion, when I know I have no grace? can I answer it to God?

M. You remember when the King came in to view the guests, he saw a man among them *not having on a wedding garment*, to whom he said, *friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment? and he was speechless.* To make a false and lying profession is inexcusable wickedness. It is true, there will be tares along with the wheat, but it is the devil sows them there, and not the servants. And if false brethren come into the church, they creep in unawares; they have no right to be there.

P. But does not my own baptism render me a church member, and entitle my child to baptism, although I am destitute of faith and repentance?

M. "Circumcision verily profiteth if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. For he is not a Jew that is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh." Rom. ii. 25. 28. One baptised in infancy, who in the sight of God practically renounces his baptism when adult, as all do who reject Christ and continue impenitent, is not considered by God as entitled to the blessings of the new covenant, but as under the curse of the law. "He that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him." John iii. 19. 36. And what right hath this man to the seals of the covenant of grace, in the sight of God, who is by Christ himself declared to be under condemnation and wrath?

P. Well, if I have no right to baptism for my poor child, I must be silent. But I wish it might be baptised.

M. Will you allow me to examine the earnest desire of baptism which you express?

P. I ought to be willing. I ought to know the motives that influence me: for God knows them, whether I do or not.

M. I am glad to see your mind so serious and candid. If this temper should continue, I should hope all your doubts would be removed. For I can tell you seriously, I am willing to baptise your child, provided you do understandingly and with all your heart desire it.

P. And do I not? I should be a cruel parent if I did not.

M. Baptism, you know, is administered *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* In baptism, therefore, you dedicate your child to God the Father, through Jesus Christ his Son, to be sanctified by the Holy Ghost; and so give up your child with all your heart to the Lord for ever to be educated for God, and to be for him, and for him alone, in time and to eternity. And do you love God to that degree, as thus to give him your child for ever? if so, why do not you give yourself to God, first of all? you love your child, but you love yourself better. First of all then cease to be cruel to your own soul; no longer practically renounce your own baptism, by turning your back on God and the Redeemer; but act up to its genuine import; give yourself to God,

through Jesus Christ his Son, that you may become the temple of the Holy Ghost; and thus ratify what your parents did for you, when they dedicated you to God in baptism.—This is that owning of the baptismal covenant which God requires at your hands. Then bring your dear child, and consecrate it to God in sincerity and truth. This is the way, the right way for a blessing. But if, instead of this, you are moved only by custom, by a sense of worldly honour, by pride and shame; and desire that holy ordinance to be administered to your child from unholy motives, as Simon Magus desired the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost to answer his carnal ends; God knows it, and all the world will know it at the day of judgment. Pray, how was it when your other children were baptised? and how is it in general to all appearance when people own the covenant and get their children baptised? are they brought up for God; or only to serve divers lusts and pleasures? Look through the country wherever you are acquainted; the youth learn to dress, to sing, to dance; but do their parents appear to understand that they have devoted them to God? and is this evidently their great concern to bring them up for God? But to leave others, and to attend only to your own heart; can it be true, that you have a heart to give your child to God, and yet not a heart to give yourself to him? think of it, my dear sir.

P. I must grant that it is absurd and inconsistent, for a parent to pretend to have a heart to give his child to God, and yet have no heart to give himself to him. But I do desire to give myself to God.

M. Pray, sir, what then hinders you from giving yourself to him? you may desire to escape everlasting misery, you may desire to be happy for ever, so Balaam did; self-love may excite to this, where there is no love to God in the heart: but if you love God so as to be willing to have him for your portion; if you love Christ so as to be willing to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow him; you may have your choice: you may do as you like: "come, for all things are now ready." And if you would now in fact make this choice, it would put an end to your present difficulties about your child. Nothing, therefore, can hinder the baptism of your

child, but your continuing to reject God and the Redeemer, by which you practically renounce your own baptism, and forfeit all the blessings of the covenant.

P. Shocking affair! my child unbaptised! none to blame but its own parents! what shall I do?

M. Is not God your Creator? are you not his by an original, absolute, entire right? is he not infinitely worthy of your supreme love? were you not in your infancy dedicated to him in baptism? and have you turned your back upon him to this very hour; and practically renounced your baptism in his sight? so that, dying in this state, your baptism will be of no advantage to you; you will perish among the uncircumcised, among the unbaptised, among pagans; as it is written, *he that believeth not shall be damned*, and *except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish!* and do you now inquire, what you shall do? ah, my dear sir! the answer is plain, *Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.* And thus at last comply with the import of your baptism, and become a disciple of Christ. "And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. But unto the wicked, God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes? or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" Psal. l. 16. Pray accept kindly this advice from one who is your friend, and who is bound by office to act an honest part with the souls committed to his charge.

P. I thank you, sir, for your fidelity, and ask your prayers: for the present, adieu!

M. I thank you for your kind visit. I ask the favour of another hour, when you are at leisure. I am always at your service; and might I be a means of your salvation, it would give me joy, while I live, and after I am dead, through eternal ages. I only add, if you will read what the late learned pious President Edwards wrote on the qualifications for Christian communion, printed at Boston; and the Rev. Mr. Green's pieces on the same subject, printed at New-York; you may in them see the truth confirmed, and objections answered more largely. And if after all you should desire further conversation on this subject, I will be ready to attend

whenever you will be so kind as to call upon me. Only come at all times, as you have at this, in a serious, friendly, candid spirit; remembering this is one of the most interesting, solemn, and important subjects. Adieu, my dear sir.

DIALOGUE II.

Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. PAUL.

Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. JESUS CHRIST.

PARISHIONER. REVEREND SIR, as you asked the favour of another hour, when I should be at leisure, I am now come to pay you a second visit, to let you know my sentiments plainly, and hope you will treat me with all the calmness and kindness you professed before.

MINISTER. I am ready to hear every thing you have to say.

P. I freely confess you made me say, and consent to every thing you chose I should say: and now I choose to turn the tables. And if you will be as condescending to me as I was to you, I doubt not but I shall easily gain my point.

M. I mean to be condescending.

P. You intimate there is no text of Scripture to justify the practice of those having children baptised, who do not come to the Lord's supper. Allow there is none, it does not in the least prove the point. I will as easily be a proselyte to your opinion, if you will point me a text of Scripture which saith that all who were baptised, or had their children baptised, came to the Lord's supper.

M. There are many things may be gathered from Revelation, which are not expressed in terms.

P. Very true; and I think equally on my side of the question as on yours. I remember you intimated before, that it was not the custom any where at the first settling this country, to baptise the children of any, only those who come to the Lord's table; and that it is not to this day the practice

of the church of Scotland; which I find is a mistake, as I am informed, upon good authority, that the church of Scotland ever did, and do to this day, baptise for those who do not come to the table. And am well knowing to the practice of the Presbyteries in this country, that they actually do baptise, for those who do not come to the table of the Lord.

M. Allow this to be so, it does not prove there is any half-way covenant.

P. It is readily allowed, and I believe generally, if not universally agreed, that there is no half-way covenant; Doctor Mather never supposed an half-way covenant. And I freely allow it is the duty of all to come to the Lord's table, whom the church will accept. But to oblige persons to that which we cannot convince them they may safely do, seems hard, and contrary, to that Christian spirit which the Gospel urgeth. Rom. xv. 1. We then that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak. Gal. vi. 2. Bear ye one another's burdens.

M. The Gospel every where urgeth condescension. But persons who in a judgment of charity are pious, are obliged by the express command of Christ. Luke xxii. 19. *This do in remembrance of me.*

P. I cannot believe the command of Christ obligeth any of his followers to do that which they in their consciences dare not attempt, under their then present circumstances. I believe it is their duty to come, but I believe they must first get their scruples removed; and I believe the church must allow them that privilege, which if they will not, in order to be consistent with themselves, they must proceed to excommunication; and I cannot see why the church must not proceed further, and excommunicate all baptised persons who neglect to come to the Lord's table; for they are all visible members of the church. A sad consequence, if it cannot be prevented.

M. To drive the point, will undoubtedly make sad work; but it will not do to tell persons they will be accepted of God, if they be not gracious; neither will it do for us to lead them to make a lying profession: nothing short of a gracious profession will give a person a right to the ordinances of the Gospel.

P. Sir, I allow what you say in part, and I do not know that any one pretends to the contrary; all are agreed in it, that no person ever can be accepted of God, and be finally happy, short of real holiness; but whoever thought, (unless it be some wild enthusiast,) that a person might not be exhorted to attempt to do his duty, unless he could do it perfectly? It seems the sentiments you advance amount to the same absurdity lately taught by a foreigner, that none but those who are gracious are to be urged to do any duty. And with regard to a lying profession, it seems your sentiments lead persons to it. For, according to you, those who make profession of real piety, have a right to the ordinance of God; and those whom the church receive on this foot, are really in covenant. So it is not grace which gives the right, but a profession: then if that profession is a false one, and the person who makes it is an hypocrite, a false profession, even a lie, brings a person really into covenant with God, and gives him a right to his ordinances. If I understand you, there cannot be any profession, only a lying one, unless persons are gracious. So a lying profession does bring persons visibly into covenant with God, or none are visibly in covenant with God, only those who are gracious. This I think is contrary to the divine declaration, and to all the divine conduct towards his covenant people. God allowed them to enter into covenant: God treated them as being in covenant: and declared they were in covenant, and accordingly had compassion on them, offered them special privileges and glorious means, that they might be trained up for his heavenly kingdom.

M. There seem to be some difficulties which I had not thought of; but is it not the covenant of grace which is to be owned?

P. Doubtless it is; no one dare deny it. Neither need they be led to give their assent to any chapter in the Apocrypha. No one disputes its being the covenant of grace; but by attending upon God's ordinances, they mean to confirm their belief of the truth of the covenant of grace, laying themselves under more solemn obligations to perform every duty.

M. I think it my duty in private, as well as in public, to explain the covenant, and to see to it, that persons under-

stand it before they make it, and to instruct them what a wicked thing it is to lie to God.

P. Very well, Sir; no doubt it is a minister's duty; and equally upon my principles as on yours. I thing it the duty of ministers to teach and instruct persons, and show them how duty is to be performed; but not teach them to neglect duty, if they cannot do it in a perfect manner. Men are no where in the bible forbid to enter into covenant, nor to be baptised, nor to attend the Lord's supper, nor to do any other duty, unless under some special circumstances; but abundantly required to do in a right manner every duty, the one as well as the other. But no special qualification is required of men to attempt to do duty, more under the New Testament than under the Old. All the congregation of Israel were required, except under particular uncleanness: and I cannot find any thing to the contrary under the New Testament. The Pharisees, and lawyers were blamed for rejecting the counsel of God, they not being baptised. (Luke vii. 30.) If it is the duty of all to be baptised, and to attend the Lord's supper, then it is the duty of ministers and churches to receive all those who visibly are qualified.

M. God never proposed any covenant to mankind, but what required real holiness on man's part. The covenant of grace requires repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

P. The covenant of grace requires real holiness, on mans part, for eternal salvation. Repentance and faith are absolutely necessary for salvation. But faith and repentance are not absolutely necessary to give persons a right to attend the means of grace; for those who have not true faith, are called upon to attend the means of grace. Though the objection may be made, that wicked men's prayers are abomination unto God, yet it is their duty to pray, as God commands all men. The Pharisees were blamed for praying in the streets, that they might have glory from men. But they were not blamed for praying; for ungodly men are blamed for not praying. Psalm xiv. 4. Isai. xliii. 22. So men are blamed for leaving off praying; (Job xxvii. 10.) hence it is their duty to pray under their circumstances. Real holiness is required on

man's part for salvation, but whether real holiness is required in order to enter into covenant, is another thing. God declares, (Lev. xxvi.) "that he would punish Israel because they had despised his judgments, and because their soul abhorred his statutes, (v. 44.) and yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them, for I am the Lord their God." Now I do not see, if persons may not enter into covenant only on the plan of being holy, why they must not be cast out on the plan of their being unholy; which is not done, as declared above, and in many other places. But God does really allow unregenerate men to be in covenant, and treats them as being in covenant: 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15. and the Lord God of their fathers sent them his messengers, rising up by times and sending them; because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. God does not declare the covenant void, but rather, he will keep covenant to a thousand generations. If men were not in covenant, they could not be cast out. But they really are in covenant, though unregenerate. For my own part, I freely confess I cannot find that the Scripture represents real holiness absolutely necessary, visibly to enter into covenant, and attend God's ordinances. I know many texts are mentioned, 2 Chron. xv. 15. is one; and all Judah rejoiced at the oath, for they had sworn with all their hearts, and sought him with their whole desire, and he was found of them, and the Lord gave them rest round about. Who can once suppose that this was done in a gracious manner by all the thousands of Judah, and Benjamin, and some of the other tribes? let us hear the covenant, and the truth will appear, ver. 12, 13. and they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers, with all their heart, and with all their soul—That whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman. Israel were fallen into idolatry, and Asa was reforming them. And they were required really to turn from the service of idols to the service of the living God, and this is what is required in the external covenant, viz. to break off from sin, and turn to God.

Another text is that, Acts viii. 37. *if thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest,* by which from the context there cannot be any more consistently understood than his belief, Jesus was the Christ the prophet had foretold, and that baptism was the way in which we are now to be visibly introduced into covenant with God. If the eunuch was a good man, it does not appear that Philip acted upon the plan to receive only good men, or that he could act upon the plan. Having no rule to determine by, we infer that what Philip acted upon, was the eunuch's giving his full assent that Jesus was the Christ.

M. We do not mean to act upon the plan of *knowing* whether men are gracious or not.

P. I cannot say what you mean; but what you say seems to imply it; if you mean they should make no higher profession than we do, why do you tell them, they have no right unless they are gracious? We require persons to make profession of their belief of the Christian religion, their assent to the glorious doctrines, acknowledging their obligations, determining to be faithful according to them. Upon which profession you will receive them, if they will tell you they believe they are gracious. I cannot find any such rule; I wish they were all gracious, and that we had good evidence to believe they were.

M. Is baptism, administered without a divine warrant, a likely means to do a child any good?

P. No, Sir; nor with neither, only as it brings a child visibly into covenant with God, and so puts it into the way of covenant mercies: unless you hold it to be regeneration.

M. But you remember the commission?

P. Yes, Sir; but I think you have not rightly represented it. The commission at large is, Mat. xxvii. 19. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Thus unlimited was their commission to teach and baptise. That in the 16th. of Mark, doubtless means the same thing. Ministers are to instruct persons in the Christian religion and to baptise them. But you do not consider baptism as included in the commission, *Go preach the Gospel to every creature.*

You say, thus unlimited is the commission to preach the Gospel. *And he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved.* You say, the faith which entitles to baptism, is a saving faith. It is quite beyond me how you get this consequence. I imagine you may as easily get another, viz. That baptism is saving. *He that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved.* It is here declared that true faith is absolutely necessary for salvation; but baptism is not. Persons who are never baptised may be saved. The faith here, that Christ speaks of, is not that merely which entitles to baptism, but that which entitles to eternal life, which is clear by the opposite. *He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.* The text does not say, *He that believeth not, and is not baptised, shall be damned;* but *he that believeth not, shall be damned.*

M. You remember when the king came in to see the guests, how he treated the man who had not on a wedding garment?

P. Yes, sir; and readily allow that God will act as the searcher of hearts, at the great day of judgment, and will punish every one who is not found having on the righteousness of Christ.

M. Do look through the country, and observe the conduct of those in the present practice of owning the covenant, and getting their children baptised; are they brought up for God? the youth learn to dress, to sing, and dance, but do their parents appear to understand that they have devoted them to God?

P. Verily, sad and awful is the case, dreadful the neglect, and parents will have an awful account to give. But, pray, sir, can you give me any better account, where churches have practised on the other plan? Hath it appeared that parents have been more faithful to bring up their children for God? And hath it had any better effect; if it hath, it is an argument in your favour; if not, the contrary; it must be an argument against you. Instance the parishes, we may appeal to all who have been acquainted, whether parents have not apparently taken, at least as great pains to instruct and educate their children; and that as many at least have been trained up for God, under the former practice as under

the present. What great benefit then upon your plan? Surely none. But suffer me to mention one disadvantage; the peace of the church is greatly disturbed: which seems to be the chief effect of warm controversies: therefore I wish you gentlemen ministers would treat the subject calmly, if you cannot be persuaded to neglect the controversy. For I tremble to think of the awful consequences, and pray God to prevent them, by leading his churches into the way of all truth. I confess my difficulties are rather increased than diminished, and must think the present practice, well attended to, will be most for the general good. I know some difficulties may be proposed in either practice: but I think contention is best to be left off before it be meddled with, and hope you will join issue with me to drop the affair, as I have no design of engaging in the controversy. In the mean time I earnestly wish to see men truly concerned about the great things of another world, to see ministers and churches joining harmoniously, to spread far and wide the honours of the Lamb that was slain, but is alive for evermore, that God may be glorified, the churches have peace, and be edified. Adieu, dear Sir.

A PARISHIONER.

POSTSCRIPT.

P. Sir, if I mistake not, you represent it to be a new thing to allow baptism to the children of any but those whose parents, one or both, were in full communion, brought in forty years after the first church was formed, by the synod met at Boston in the year 1662. The Rev. Dr. Increase Mather gives us a very different account in the book you quoted. He mentions the opinion of many of the most pious and godly ministers who came over into this country at the first settling of New-England. Mr. Cotton, Mr. Hooker, and Mr. Stone, who came in the same vessel in the year 1633, all freely give their opinion, that children, whose parents are baptised, have a right to baptism, who are in covenant until they

are cast out. Mr. Cotton, minister of the first church in Boston, says, in a letter dated in the year 1634, (which was before 1662.) we may not account such parents for Pagans and Infidels, who are themselves baptised, and profess their belief of the fundamental articles of the Christian faith, and live without notorious scandalous crimes, though they give not clear evidence of their regenerate state. In the year 1635, came over, Mather, Norton, and Shepherd. Three extraordinary men; each give their opinion in the affirmative. In the year 1636, came Patrick and Rogers, Mr. Smith of Weathersfield, Mr Prudden of Milford, and many others, all in the affirmative. So the congregationalists at home, Dr. Owen, Dr. Holmes, and others. From which it appears, that it was no new thing for persons in covenant to have their children baptised, if they did not come to the table. And I think many of their arguments unanswerable. P.

DIALOUGE III.

PARISHIONER. SIR, this third visit I am come to make you, for I have lately read a piece printed at New-London, entitled, "A Dialogue between a minister and his parishioner, concerning the half-way covenant, continued;" said to be written by one of the most learned and ingenious ministers in the colony. I hope therefore, now if ever, by the assistance of such a patron, to be able to carry my point. Instructed by him, I give up the half-way covenant; I grant there is but one covenant. I give up the half-way practice too, as founded only in ignorance, and the mistaken notions of the vulgar. I am convinced, that he that is qualified to have his children baptised, is equally qualified to come to the Lord's table. I come therefore to claim baptism for my child, and a place at the Lord's table for myself, as my proper right. p. 6. However, I am not well pleased at the publication of our discourse in my first visit, although I must confess you have given a fair representation of what passed, because being very dull at that time, I make but a very indifferent figure in the eyes of the public. p. 2.

MINISTER. Be comforted, my friend; no blame is laid on you by the public. I bear it all; and I am willing to bear it for your good: and methinks you have only cause of joy and thankfulness; for to be convinced so soon of your mistake, is no small favour. No doubt the voice of the clergy, who practise the half-way, declaring as one man, that he who is qualified to offer his child to baptism, is equally qualified to come to the Lord's table, has wrought your conviction; for your former faith and practice were grounded merely on the custom of the country: this led you to think that the Lord's supper was more holy than baptism. But while you hear all the ministers, with whom you converse, declare they mean no such thing; they practise the half-way only in condescension to the ignorance, and groundless unscriptural scruples of the common people; you are convinced; you give up the point; you own the command of Christ, *do this in remembrance of me*, is binding on all his disciples: but, pray, upon what grounds, do you now so boldly claim baptism for your child?

P. Although I was "uncommonly dull and muddy," in my first visit; yet, "you know, sir, what I wanted was to have my child baptised. As you told me there was but one covenant, so we were agreed that I had entered into that covenant, the very same covenant that you entered into three and thirty years ago, when you was admitted into the church. And, sir, why may I not have the seal of it set upon my child?" p. 4.

M. Did not I expressly tell you, that "If the covenant owned is the covenant of grace, and if the parent acts understandingly and honestly in the affair, he is a good man; he has a right before God to baptism for his children, and an equal right to the Lord's supper? But that if the covenant owned is not the covenant of grace, those who have owned it, have in the sight of God no right to either of those ordinances, which are seals of that covenant, and of no other: no more right than if they had given their assent to any chapter in the Apocrypha.?'

P. True, you did so; and there is but *one covenant*, says my patron.

M. This covenant then is the covenant of grace, which, we are all agreed, requires repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ: or else there is no covenant of grace at all; for he says there is but one. But lay your hand upon your heart, and tell me the truth honestly, did you mean to profess repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, when you owned the covenant? or in other words, did you mean to profess a compliance with the covenant of grace? Pray, sir, recollect and repeat the very words you spake to me in your first visit.

P. You make me blush; for I told you the truth in my first visit, from the bottom of my heart; and this is what I said: I "knew myself to be unconverted; I meant to own the covenant, as the phrase is, and have my children baptised; but I had no design to profess godliness, or to pretend a real compliance with the covenant of grace. This godly people may do, but it had been great hypocrisy in me to do it. To lie to men is bad, but to lie to God is worse. I supposed that owning the covenant was what the unconverted might do." These were my very words: and on these principles I acted, as do all others that I am acquainted with, who own the covenant, have their children baptised, and do not come to the Lord's table; and I verily thought this was right before my first visit.

M. How is it possible a man so honest as you *then* appeared to be, should *now* act such a dishonest part, as you have done? It is my duty, as a minister of Christ, to rebuke you sharply; for *then* you told me, as you *now* own, that you did not mean to profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, upon which I denied baptism to your child; and yet *just now* you pretended you did mean to do it. You have need to blush; this deliberate dissimulation in such an affair, is no small crime. Did your learned patron advise you to this step, to get your child baptised? Is this the way to obtain God's blessing?

P. Be this as it may, I am willing now to make a profession, and publicly to enter into covenant with God, and I have no objection against the form used in your church. I can make

that covenant, and speak truly in the sight of God, notwithstanding I know I have no grace. p. 6, 7.

M. How can a man who knows he has no grace, profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, without wilful lying?

P. I do not mean to make a profession that shall imply conversion. There would be 'special hypocrisy' in doing so. p. 14.

M. What then? do you suppose the unconverted do comply with the covenant of grace? That the unconverted have repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ? That the unconverted choose the Lord Jehovah for their sovereign Lord, and supreme good through Jesus Christ, and give up themselves to his service, to walk in all his ways, seeking his glory?

P. No, sir, by no means. But "if it be true that the Lord Jehovah is my sovereign Lord and supreme good through Jesus Christ, i. e. if it be true, that he who through Christ is the author of being, and of every mercy to all the living, is the sovereign Lord and supreme good of every living soul, it is no harm to avouch it." I mean to give my assent to this truth, and no more.

M. Doth not the devil believe the truth of this proposition as firmly as any wicked man does? and is he in covenant? You have need to be better instructed about the nature of entering into covenant with God, before you can be considered as qualified in point of doctrinal knowledge.

P. No, sir, I am not so ignorant, neither. I know in what sense you mean to understand your covenant. But knowing myself to be unconverted, I cannot profess a compliance with the covenant of grace in that sense. I cannot profess supreme love to God, and that I do actually take him as my God, my chief good, through Jesus Christ. This is not in my heart. Therefore I mean to adopt the words of the covenant in a different sense; even in the sense in which an unconverted man who is at enmity against God may use them, and yet speak true.

M. But this is not to profess a compliance with the covenant of grace. And therefore should you make it, it could give you no right to sealing ordinances for yourself or your

child. Rather is it gross and scandalous dissimulation, very much like what is practised by Arians and Socinians among the clergy of the church of England, when they subscribe the thirty-nine articles, in order to qualify themselves for a benefice upon the establishment; which practice is condemned by all honest men.

P. Be this as it may, I can at least with moral sincerity promise, "to walk in all his ways and keep all his commands, seeking his glory." p. 7.

M. The obedience engaged by one who professes a compliance with the covenant of grace, is that kind of obedience which the covenant requires, viz. an holy obedience, an obedience which proceeds from faith and love. And do you mean to engage this?

P. No, by no means. I only mean to engage what an unconverted man may do, while such. p. 7 [a].

M. But this unholy obedience is not that kind of obedience which the covenant of grace requires at your hands. So that you mean to profess neither to comply with the covenant of grace at present, nor to live such a holy life as it

a Other writers maintain, that such as know themselves to be unconverted, when they join in full communion with the church, are to engage that very kind of obedience required in the covenant of grace, from that time and forward till they die. They are not to profess that they have as yet loved God, believed in Christ, repented of their sins, or lived holy lives; but they are to engage that they will do all this as soon as ever they have joined with the church, and from that time forward till they die. This is Mr. Beckwith's scheme, answer to Mr. Green, p. 26. If these professors are so near being converted in their own judgments, really and honestly, that they do expect to be actually converted as soon as they have joined with the church, it is a pity they do not put off their public profession till the next sabbath; and so be converted first: and then they might make a full profession of a present compliance with the covenant of grace, and so the whole controversy might be ended. This is always the way that honest people take when they enter into the marriage covenant, to which this writer compares this transaction. They do not come and present themselves before the priest to enter into the marriage covenant, till they begin to love each other. And now they can with a good conscience give their consent to the whole marrige covenant, as being conscious to themselves that they already have such an heart in them. But should a pair offer to be married, who had, through their whole courtship, and to that moment, been at enmity against each other, as much as Paul declares every *carnal mind* to be *against God*, (Rom. viii. 7.) it would be looked upon as a hypocritical, mad, and stupid piece of conduct.

requires for the future. In short, you mean to use the words of a saint with the heart of a hypocrite; and so to come into Christ's visible church with the language of a friend, but with the heart of an enemy. Your proposed conduct may serve to give a very true and just exposition to those words of our Saviour, *Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?* As if he had said, "I call you friend, because you, in words, make the same profession which my real friends do. But why do you do this, when at the same time you have the heart of an enemy? why do you act this hypocritical part? Such dissimulation is *special hypocrisy.*" If you could not comply with our covenant in its plain sense, and in the sense you knew we understood it, why did not you rather come like an honest man, and say so, and desire to have it laid aside; and a new covenant, an ungracious covenant, introduced in its room; a covenant which you could make, and act an honest part?

P. I thought there was but one covenant. I supposed the covenant you use in your church, as you understand it, was that one covenant. I thought that baptism and the Lord's supper were seals of the covenant of grace, and of *no other.* And so I must profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, or I cannot be received among Christ's disciples, or claim the privileges of such. Therefore I put this new sense on the words, that I might consent to them with a good conscience.

M. But the words, in this new sense, are not the covenant of grace, but an ungracious covenant; in sense and meaning exactly like the half-way covenant, in use in some churches, where they have two covenants, (a number of such churches I could name to you,) so while you cry out against the name of a half-covenant, you take the covenant of grace, and turn it into the very thing, in order to bring it down to a level with your graceless heart; and then put on a bold face, and come and claim the privileges peculiar to those who profess a compliance with the covenant of grace itself.

P. Sir, "I am persuaded God has made the Lord's supper a converting ordinance to many, and he may make it so to me." p. 9.

M. And, O my friend, will you dissemble in this shocking manner, in order to get into the church, that you may come to the Lord's table, and be converted! Is this what you mean by *moral sincerity?* I tell you with that plainness that becomes my office, that to come thus, is not the way for a blessing, but for a curse. For *he that eateth and drinketh unworthily,* instead of being in the way of a blessing, exposes himself to the righteous judgment of God; agreeable to the apostle's words to the Corinthians.

P. Nay, sir, the Corinthians "turned the Lord's supper into a feast of Bacchus." And what is this to me? p. 14.

M. Is not deliberate, designed dissimulation, in the most solemn, religious transaction on earth, even in covenanting with the great God, as bad as drunkenness?

P. Nay, sir, but I am expressly commanded to come to the Lord's supper, by Christ himself. p. 15.

M. This command was given to none but Christ's disciples. And in the apostolic age none ever pretended to attend the Lord's supper, but those who had made a profession, and were admitted into the Christian church. As yet you have not made a profession, to be sure, not such a profession as God ever required; nor is the profession you now propose to make, a profession of a compliance with God's covenant, even with the covenant of grace.

P. "I am able to demonstrate, as clearly as any theorem is demonstrated in Euclid, that if an unconverted man may not avouch the Lord for his God, nor resolve to obey him, he may not say, *Our father which art in heaven; forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.*" p. 8. And it is damnable heresy to teach that the unconverted ought not to pray. p. 9. And if they sin in praying, yet it is less sin to pray than not to pray. p. 12.

M. It is a greater sin to lie than to do nothing. Lying is not a means of grace. Lying is not an appointed means of conversion. There are many things unconverted sinners may say to God, and speak true. To speak the truth to God is well: Jam. ii. 19. but to say that which they know is not true, is a thousand times worse than to say nothing. Mat. xxiii. 14. Acts v. 3. And for a man who is sensible that it

is not in his heart to forgive those who have trespassed against him, and that in fact he does not forgive them, to come into the presence of God, and pray, saying, *Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,* is implicitly to ask God not to forgive him; but this is a greater sin than not to pray at all, as all will allow; and it will hold true, as true as any "theorem in Euclid," that lying is worse than nothing, in praying, in covenanting, and in every thing else.

P. Sir, on your plan three quarters of the Christian world will be shut out of the church. p. 14.

M. Were it not better, were it not more for the honour of Christ and Christianity, in the sight of Pagans, Jews, and Mahometans, and in the sight of the ungodly in Christian countries, and more for the good of their own souls, that nine tenths should be shut out of the church, if need so require, than to come in by wilful lying! But for a man to profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, when he knows he has no grace, is no better; and yet without such a profession no man can visibly enter into covenant with God. For God has no other covenant extant, of which baptism and the Lord's supper are seals; for there is but one covenant, as you allow; and to use the words of this covenant in such a sense as to make it a graceless half-covenant, gives no more right to sealing ordinances, than to repeat any chapter in the Apocrypha.

P. If your scheme "should prevail, it would bring back the country into the ancient state of heathenism [b]."

M. And pray, sir, who do you think will have the hottest hell, a heathen who dares not lie, or a Christian who allows himself to lie in the most solemn religious transactions? or which will be the likeliest to be converted by the preaching of the Gospel?

P. "When men of sense and conscience find themselves denied the enjoyment of ordinances for themselves and children in our churches," they will turn to the church of England [b].

M. No man of sense or conscience will desire to make a lying profession to get his children baptised; he would ra-

[b] Mr. Beckwith.

their they never should be baptised than do such a wicked deed. And we stand ready to baptise the children of all, who can, understandingly and honestly, make that profession which God requires.

P. "Christ's visible kingdom requires in its members qualifications like itself, viz. those that are visible and knowable." p. 16.

M. And we, in receiving them, act entirely on what is visible, viz. on their public profession, attended with an answerable conversation, just as they did in the apostolic age.

P. "Every baptised person is a member of Christ's visible church: but I was baptised in my infancy, therefore I have a right to all the exernal privileges of a church-member." p. 16.

M. You remember the answer I gave to this at your second visit, viz. "Baptism alone, in the apostolic age, never made any adult person a church-member without a profession; profession was first made, and then they were baptised. Those therefore that are baptised in infancy, in order to be members in this sense, must make a profession when they become adult. The New-England churches, therefore, are right in demanding it."

P. You must then have a half-covenant for these half-members.

M. No, by no means. They are bound by their parents' act and deed to comply with the covenant of grace itself, as soon as they become adult. With this covenant, and with this alone, do we urge them to comply. Whenever they appear to do it, we receive them to full communion. But if they openly renounce the God of their fathers, and obstinately persist in it, they must be considered and treated as persons who have visibly renounced their baptism, in which their parents devoted them to God through Jesus Christ, to be for ever his.

P. "It is certain that the Gospel contains no rule whereby to determine with any certainty that a man is gracious." And therefore your scheme cannot be acted upon. p. 9, 10.

M. It is equally certain the Gospel contains no rule to determine with certainty that men are orthodox, or sound in the faith. They may make an orthodox profession, but we cannot be certain that they mean as they say. To be sure, if they

allow themselves to use orthodox words in a heterodox sense, as you do in the business of covenanting; and the truth is, let the qualifications be what you please, it is not necessary the church should have a certainty that the candidates for admission to sealing ordinances, have them really and in the sight of God. It is sufficient, on every scheme, that they appear to have them, to a judgment of charity, regulated by the word of God.

P. Such inconsistency may by no means be charged on the Deity, as to institute an ordinance with a design that never can be carried into execution; as is the case, if Christ has not given some infallible criterion, or mark, whereby to know who may be admitted. p. 9, 10.

M. Very well, sir, be pleased to take the inconsistence to yourself, until you can be infallibly certain, that the candidate for admission is really orthodox and morally sincere in the sight of God, as searcher of hearts. And in order to this, you will need the aid of that enthusiastical sort of people of whom your minister speaks; (p. 10.) for it cannot be known, without an immediate revelation. You must get their *spirit* to come and tell you, whether men are as orthodox and morally sincere in the sight of God, as they profess to be before men. For there is no infallible mark whereby you can certainly know it. An immediate revelation is absolutely necessary for this, "as I am able to demonstrate as clearly as any theorem is demonstrated in Euclid."

P. Be this as it may; whether the church must be certain or not; yet we ourselves must be certain, that we have the necessary qualifications, or we must not come. p. 10.

M. We are naturally as conscious of volitions as of speculations, of love as of belief, whenever we look into our own hearts, as all will allow. A man whose mind is wavering between Arminianism and Calvinism, inclining sometimes to one side from the corrupt biasses of his heart, and sometimes to the other by the force of evidence, may not be able to say which he believes. So a man whose mind is wavering between God and Mammom, inclining sometimes to one master with a view to his future interest, and sometimes to the other from an attachment to his present, may not be able to

say which master upon the whole he chooses; for *the double minded man is unstable in all his ways.* But Christ does not desire men to make a profession of being his disciples till they have sat down and counted the cost, and are come to a settled determination; as is plain from Luke xiv. 25—33. And when men are come to that settled determination, which our Saviour there describes, they may say that they have come to it. And this is all the profession which we desire.

P. Thus far I have acted the part of a disputant, and I have now done. Suffer me therefore once more to reassume that honest character which I sustained in my first visit; for let others say what they will, I design to act an honest part. Now the truth of the case is this, I am not specially concerned to know by what rule the church must be governed in admitting members; neither am I concerned to know what they must do who are in doubt about themselves: the only question about which I am exercised, relates to my own particular case. I know I have no grace. I know I am unconverted. I told you so at first, and so I have told all the ministers with whom I have conversed; and how any man, that knows he has no grace, can profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, and speak true, I could not understand, years ago. It was this that induced me to own the covenant, as the phrase is, and not to join in full communion, that so I might have my children baptised. Not one of the ministers with whom I have conversed, appears to justify the principles upon which I acted; but all as one man, say, there is but one covenant, and this one covenant is the covenant of grace: indeed, they explain away the covenant of grace, till they bring it down into a graceless covenant, and then tell me I can comply with that, and ought to do so, and thus join in full communion. But you have fully convinced me of the inconsistence and absurdity of this; and yet I would beg leave to inquire, why might not the covenant of grace be voted out by the church, and a graceless covenant be substituted in its room? and then such as I am could consistently profess a compliance with such a covenant, and have baptism for their children.

M. But if a church should vote out the covenant of grace, or, which is the same thing, in other words, should vote out Christianity, how could it any longer be considered as a visible church of Christ, or as having a visible right to the visible seals of God's covenant? And besides, should you bind your child to one of your neighbours, to learn some mechanic art, why, in this case, might not the covenant be sealed, ratified, and confirmed by the administration of baptism, *in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?*

P. The proposal shocks my mind. It would be a profanation of God's holy ordinance, to take God's seal, appropriated to God's covenant, and put it to man's covenant.

M. But this ungracious covenant is man's covenant, and not God's. And to take God's seal, appropriated to God's covenant, even to the covenant of grace, and apply it to a covenant which God never made, to a covenant made by men, is to profane the holy ordinance; and knowingly to profane God's holy ordinance, is not a duty, nor is this to put ourselves in the way of a blessing.

P. What need is there of any covenant at all?

M. It is not the manner of men to put a seal to a clean piece of paper. Nor did God ever appoint seals to be put to a blank. God's seals were appointed to be put to God's covenant; and we have no right to put them to a blank; and besides, it would be to give up the import of the actions, and to render sealing ordinances unmeaning, empty, useless ceremonies.

P. What shall I do?

M. *Repent and believe the Gospel.* Thus preached John the Baptist: thus preached Jesus Christ; and thus his apostles. And therefore, being emboldened by their examples, I say unto you, *Enter in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

P. I thank you, sir, for your kind and friendly instructions. I ask your prayers.—I must go.

'M. I will detain you but a minute longer. You remember your former minister, the author of the second Dialogue *concerning the half-way covenant*, said, "There is no half-way covenant. Doubtless it is the covenant of grace. No one disputes its being the covenant of grace; no one DARE DENY IT." And your present patron says much the same. You remember also, that in your second visit, I told you, that to say this, was implicitly to "yield up every point for which we contend;" and, in this view, I added, "nor do I doubt, if this controversy should go on, it will soon appear, that there is *one who dares deny it*. For otherwise all men of sense will see, that gentlemen on that side of the question are grossly inconsistent with themselves." And now it hath come to pass, that one of the most discerning gentlemen on that side of the question, has published a laboured piece, to prove, that in order to enjoy sealing ordinances for ourselves and our children, we are not to profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, but only with a graceless covenant. This therefore is the only point that needs to be settled, in order to settle the whole controversy; to this point, therefore, I advise you to give a most serious attention. For, if it can be proved that baptism and the Lord's supper are seals of the covenant of grace, and not of a graceless covenant, *the axe will be laid to the root of the tree*. Attend, therefore, to the subject with the utmost impartiality, that you may obtain not only light in your head, but also reap saving advantage to your soul. I have known some Christless sinners, by the means of this controversy, awakened to a greater concern about their eternal salvation than ever they were before. And, be assured, sir, that the truths of the Gospel, if they are not unto your own soul *a savour of life unto life*, will be *a savour of death unto death*. Eternity, an endless eternity, lies before you. You have slept secure in sin long enough; it is high time you should awake. Every circumstance of your own soul, and every circumstance of your dear offspring, calls upon you without delay to awake, and turn to God through Jesus Christ, in sincerity and truth. O, what joy would it give me, ere long to admit you into full communion with the church, on a profession of a compliance with the

covenant of grace, in which you should appear to act understandingly and honestly! That salvation may thus come to you and to your household, may God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ.

My dear sir, farewell.

DIALOGUE IV.

A reply to the parishioner's letter, concerning qualifications for Christian communion; printed at New-Haven.

PARISHIONER. SIR, three times I have been with you heretofore, to get my child baptised; and I am now come to make you a fourth visit, with the *letter* lately printed at New-Haven, in my hand.

MINISTER. I am willing, sir, and ever have been, to oblige you in all things wherein I lawfully may. And particularly, I am willing to baptise your child, if you really, understanding the true import of the action, are willing to offer your child in baptism; even to *dedicate it to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;* in whose name it is to be baptised. But, if you do indeed love God so well, as that you are willing to give him your child, to be his for ever, why are you not as willing to give him yourself? And why should you not, first of all, give yourself up to God through Jesus Christ; and then, after that, give your child to him? In this way God will become your covenant God and Father in this world, and your eternal portion in the next. *This* is all I wait for. And this is what I have, from the beginning, been urging upon you, as your immediate, indispensable duty. You remember what I said to you in your first visit, "if you love God so as to be willing to have him for your portion; if you love Christ so as to be willing to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow him; you may have your choice: you may do as you like: *come, for all things are now ready.* And if you would now in fact make this choice, it would put an end to your present difficulties about your child. Nothing,

therefore, can hinder the baptism of your child, but your continuing to reject God and the Redeemer, by which you practically renounce your own baptism, and forfeit all the blessings of the covenant." And you remember my parting words in your last visit, "every circumstance of your own soul, and every circumstance of your dear offspring, calls upon you without delay, to awake, and to turn to God through Jesus Christ, in sincerity and truth. O, what joy would it give me, ere long, to admit you into full communion with the church, on a profession of a compliance with the covenant of grace, in which you should appear to act understandingly and honestly!" And you are my witness, that at all times I am ready to instruct you, to pray for you, and if need be, to rebuke you with all tenderness and kindness.

P. Inspired by the spirit which runs through the New-Haven *letter*, I must say, that I despise your rebukes, p. 4. and do not desire your prayers. p. 18. "Could I sufficiently dissemble, I should *give you joy*, and gain a speedy, easy admittance into your church;" p. 10.—but, for my part, I look upon you as little or nothing better than the very worst of heretics. For "your principles, sir, are too near of kin to those most shocking principles lately broached in the land, by several who have a fondness for being authors; particularly by Mr. Sandeman, and Mr. Hopkins. Mr. Sandeman says, that *faith is obtained, as the most remarkable discoveries have been obtained, the use of the magnet, Jesuit's bark, and many chymical discoveries; i. e. not when these things, but something else, was looked for.*—Mr. Hopkins says, *it is indeed, as great an absurdity as can be thought of, to suppose that the corrupt, vicious heart, does any thing towards becoming holy, &c. for all the exercises and volitions of the corrupt unregenerate heart are certainly the exercises of sin.*"

"These principles, sir, I look upon of the most dangerous tendency, of any that were ever broached in the Christian world, deism itself not excepted." p. 20.

M. My dear sir, be cool, and think a minute or two who you are, and what you say, and what you have been doing. You are my parishioner. In this character you have made me three visits before this. In this character you are now talk-

ing with me. You knew my principles before you ever desired me to baptise your child. And you knew that the church under my care profess to be in the same scheme of religion with me. And would you desire that your child should be baptised by the worst of heretics! Or would you desire to join with such a church! Where is the honesty or consistence of your conduct! You are inspired with a spirit, indeed; but I fear you *know not what spirit you are of.*

As to our sentiments touching *total depravity, works done by unregenerate men,* and the *sovereignty of divine grace in the conversion of sinners,* we profess to agree with the *Assembly of divines at Westminster.* And you know, that their *confession of faith,* and *larger* and *shorter catechisms* are adopted by the church of Scotland, as their test of orthodoxy; and are much the same with the *Savoy confession of faith,* which is adopted, in general, by the churches in Massachusetts and in Connecticut. But,

These public formulas declare, as to *total depravity,* that "we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil." And as to *works done by unregenerate men,* that "although for the matter of them they may be things which God commands, and of good use to themselves and others; yet because they proceed not from a heart purified by faith, nor are done in a right manner, according to the word, nor to a right end, the glory of God; they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God. And yet their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing to God." And, as to the *divine sovereignty in the conversion of sinners,* they say, that "all those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased in his appointed and accepted time effectually to call, &c. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from any thing at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call," &c.

And the famous Mr. Stoddard, in his *Treatise concerning the Nature of Conversion,* says, p. 7. "If men do not act from gracious motives, and for gracious ends, they do not the thing that God commands; there is no obedience to God in what

they do: they do not attend the will of God." And, p. 9. "There is an opposition between saving grace and common grace; common graces are lusts, and do oppose saving grace. Making his own salvation his end, is contrary to making the glory of God his last end: hating sin, not because it wrongs God, but because it exposes him, is resisting the command of God: bringing every thing into subserviency to his own ends, is opposite to the bringing every thing into a subserviency to God's glory. The man that hath but common grace, goeth quite in another path than that which God directs unto: when he goeth about to establish his own righteousness, he sets himself against that way of salvation which God prescribes. Rom. x. 3. There is an enmity in the ways of such men as have but common grace, to the ways that godly men take." Thus Mr. Stoddard.

And now, my parishioner, I appeal to you, to judge whether these quotations, out of the confession of faith and Mr. Stoddard, "are not as near of kin to those shocking principles, which you look upon of the most dangerous tendency of any that were ever broached in the Christian world, deism itself not excepted," as any thing I ever advanced from the pulpit or the press.

And if some of the important doctrines of Christianity are more obnoxious to you than deism itself; that is, if you are nearer a deist than you are a Christian; certainly you are not fit to be a church-member, or to offer your child in baptism, or to partake of the Lord's supper, according to your own principles. For you say, that men must be orthodox. And you cannot deny, that the church of Scotland, and the churches in New-England, have as good a right to judge for themselves, what principles are agreeable to the word of God, and of importance to be professed, as you have to judge for yourself. We are willing, that those who look upon the doctrines contained in our public formulas, as being worse than deism, should hold communion among themselves, but we think it an inconsistence in them to desire to be members of our churches.

P. 'Unholy obedience is a contradiction in terms; for holiness and obedience are the same thing.' p. 8.

M. In saying this, you condemn Mr. Mather's scheme of an external graceless covenant, by wholesale. However, strictly speaking, what you say is true. And in this view Mr. Stoddard's words are exactly right, (speaking of the unregenerate,) 'There is no obedience to God in what they do.' And thus it is said by the church of England, in her 39 articles; 'Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his spirit, are not pleasant to God. Yea, rather, for that they are not done as God hath commanded and willed them to be done, we doubt not but that they have the nature of sin.' See article 13. Do you, sir, believe this?

P. No; far from it. Rather I believe that 'all the obedience of an unconverted man is holy obedience.' Yea, I believe, that 'the obedience of an unrenewed man, so far forth as it is obedience, is as holy as any that a gracious man can yield. Though it is but a partial and imperfect obedience, yet just so much as there is of obedience, just so much holiness. And, 'a measure of strength is given him by God, to walk in all his ways and keep all his commands,' seeking his glory.' p. 8, 9. And in any other view I must acknowledge, that the unconverted covenanter would be 'perjured.' For, *to swear to obey a covenant which we cannot obey, is perjury.* And therefore, had the unconverted no power to yield a holy obedience, it would be perjury in them to enter into covenant engagements to do it. p. 8.

M. If I understand you right, and you are in earnest in this declaration, then you believe that the unconverted are, in a measure, really holy. And therefore, are not totally depraved, as is asserted in the Confession of Faith adopted by our churches. And if this be so, then you are not sound in the faith. And those who are not sound in the faith, have no right to church privileges, according to your own principles. You, therefore, cannot consistently claim church privileges of any of our churches. Indeed, you may think our Confession of Faith not agreeable to the word of God, and you may think the same of the articles of the church of England: if, therefore, you would act a consistent part, you should join, neither with us nor them; but rather form a new church, on a new plan, with those who think as you do. For it is ab-

surd for those who differ in essentials, to walk together as brethren. And to profess our belief of articles of religion, which we do not believe, for the sake of church privileges, is as gross dissimulation in the laity among us, as it is in the clergy in England, who subscribe the 39 articles of that church, in order to enjoy a benefice, when they do not believe them, as in the case with the Arians, Socinians, and Arminians, among them. In a word, if you really disbelieve the doctrines of *total depravity*, and of *divine sovereignty*, you can by no means consistently join with us.

P. 'These principles deny the present state of the unregenerate to be a state of probation: they deny him to be a moral agent: they deny the justice of punishment for any sin.' p. 21.

M. So says Dr. Taylor, so says Dr. Whitby, so says Dr. Stebbins, and all other Pelagian and Arminian writers I ever read. They all agree, that the doctrines of *total depravity* and of *divine sovereignty*, as held by the Calvinists, are absolutely inconsistent with moral agency. They have said it a thousand times, and they have been answered as often. Thus stands the controversy. "Because I have no heart to love God, therefore I cannot be bound in duty to love him." "Because I am *dead in sin*, and opposite to all good, therefore that law which says, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things*, cannot justly reach me." "Because we all, with one consent, excuse ourselves from coming to the Gospel feast; therefore we are not in a state of probation." "Because God says, *may I not do what I will with my own?* therefore, we may say, we are not in duty bound, to regard his law, or hearken to his Gospel." Reasoning, which if it has weight in it, proves the fundamental maxims of the bible to be false; for that book teaches, that we may be *dead in sin*, and yet *deserve to be damned* for that sin: that God is not *obliged* in justice, or by promise, to grant converting grace to any impenitent sinner; and yet it is the duty of such sinners *every where to repent*. But you may, at your leisure, see my sentiments on these subjects at large, and my confutation of Mr. Sandeman's scheme of religion, both at once, in a book lately printed at Boston, entitled, *An Essay on the Nature and Glory of the Gospel*. However,

I will readily grant, that there is an absolute necessity of denying total depravity on the one hand, or of giving up the covenant of grace, and substituting a graceless covenant in its room, on the other hand; in order to open a door for the unconverted, as such, to enter into covenant with God, and join in full communion with the church, consistently with truth and honesty. But, yet so it happens, that on either plan men cannot consistently be admitted into our churches. For, if they deny total depravity, they must be deemed not sound in the faith, according to our approved standard; and therefore, must not be admitted. And if they substitute a graceless covenant in the room of the covenant of grace, they go off from the plan on which our churches were originally founded; and so, consistently, cannot be members of them. We must have a new confession of faith, and a new plan of church order, and form new churches, before either of these ways will answer the end. Besides, if the unconverted have a degree of real holiness, and do, though in an imperfect manner, yet really comply with the covenant of grace, then the unconverted are, in fact, entitled not only to the seals, but also to all the blessings of the covenant of grace; even to pardon, justification, and eternal life. Than which nothing can be more contrary to the whole tenour of Scripture, which every where declares all such to be under the wrath of God, and curse of the law, condemned already, liable to be struck dead and sent to hell at any moment. John iii. 18. 36. Gal. iii. 10.

P. The unconverted Israelites made a profession of the very covenant you plead for; and why cannot we? p. 28.

M. You can, if you will, do as they did, viz. *flatter him with your mouth, and lie unto him with your tongues.* But then you ought not to take it ill, if the true nature of your conduct is, from the word of God, set in a clear light before you.

P. But I do take it ill; indeed I do. Particularly the rebuke you gave me for dissimulation, in my last visit, I do not take well at your hands. For I am not the guilty man. p. 3.

M. The man I rebuked for dissimulation, was my parishioner, whose conversation with me was printed in the New-

Haven *Dialogue*; and who, in his first visit, told me 'that he did not mean to profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, when he *owned the covenant*.' On which I let him know, that he, for that very reason, had no right by virtue of that profession, to claim the seal of the covenant of grace for his child. For this very same man afterwards came again to me, to baptise that very same child, and put on a bold face, and declared, that "he had entered into that covenant," and therefore had a right to the seal of it.

P. "I shall not trouble myself to defend this parishioner against the charge of dissimulation." p. 4. But I am not the same man. p. 3.

M. If you are not the same man, why do you take the charge of dissimulation to yourself *now*? Or why did you pretend to be the same man *then*? Why did you call yourself by the same name? And why did you begin with me in these words? "Sir, I find the dialogue which passed between us the other day is printed." Is it not evident, by this, that you intended then, that I should consider you as the very same man? but no sooner do I find you contradicting yourself, and rebuke you for it, but you cry out, "this dialogue did not pass between you and me." To use your own words, sir, "it is easy to see your unlucky mistake." And "it is really pleasant enough" to see you drove to a necessity of changing your name, in order to get rid of the fault, which otherwise you must, even in your own judgment, be reputed guilty of. We have heard of men's changing their names when pursued for their crimes, that they might avoid their pursuers; but did you before now ever hear of a parishioner, that went to his minister to get his child baptised, that did so?

P. Be this as it may, the grand question is this, viz. "Can a man, who knows he has no grace, profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, without wilful lying?" p. 5. You say he cannot: I say, he can.—Indeed, once I was of your opinion; and this was the reason I did not join in full communion; but I am of another mind now. And I can, though I know I have no grace, yet make a profession of a compliance with the covenant of grace, as honestly as any man. And to charge any one with wilful lying for this, is virtually to charge the ministers and churches through the land with that horrid crime. p. 3.

M. As this is a matter of importance, it deserves to be thought of seriously, and to be thoroughly looked into. And if you will be serious only long enough to understand the proposition, you will be forced to believe it. For,

By the covenant of grace, we mean that covenant which promises pardon and eternal life to those who comply with it. By a compliance with it, we mean, saving grace; i. e. such gracious exercises as are infallibly connected with salvation. Such as *repentance toward God*, and *faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*, which imply supreme love to God and Christ in their very nature, and a cordial disposition to a life of sincere obedience to all God's commands [d]. By one who has no grace, we mean one who is entirely destitute of this repentance, faith, love, and new obedience, which are connected with eternal life; being *dead in sin*.

When therefore it is said, that "a man, who knows that he has no grace, cannot profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, without wilful lying;" the truth of the proposition is as evident, as when it is said, that "a man who knows that two and two are but four, cannot say, that two and two are five, without wilful lying." And therefore, as soon as the proposition is understood, it cannot but be believed. There is no way to avoid it. For,

1. If you explain down the covenant of grace into a graceless covenant, with which a graceless heart may really comply, it will not help your cause in the least. For if a graceless heart may comply with this graceless covenant, yet it still remains a self-evident truth, that a graceless heart doth not comply with the covenant of grace. Or,

2. If you represent an unconverted graceless man, as not being *dead in sin*, and *without strength*; but as really having a degree of spiritual life, and spiritual strength, and spiritual

d A saving compliance with the covenant of grace, is what does not in the least degree take place in the unregenerate, but does actually take place in all true believers. For although it implies saving grace, yet it does not imply perfect holiness. Those, therefore, who are true believers, may make a profession honestly; but those who are not, cannot. To say, that a true believer cannot make a profession honestly, because he is not perfectly holy, supposes that a saving compliance with the covenant of grace implies perfect holiness. Which is not true, as is granted on all hands.

ability to yield holy obedience to all God's commands; and so as complying with the covenant of grace, in reality, though but in an imperfect degree, it will not help your cause at all. For this graceless man, so called, is in fact a gracious man, and is entitled not only to the seals, but also to the blessings of the covenant of grace. Because he does, in fact, comply with it. Rather it runs you into the absurdity of saying that some unconverted, graceless sinners, are real converts and true saints, and have a title to eternal life, i. e. of expressly contradicting yourself. Or,

3. If you say, "a graceless sinner may comply with the covenant of grace, with moral sincerity, though not with gracious sincerity:" it will not help your cause. For there is but one kind of real complying with the covenant of grace; and this entitles to eternal life. For he that really complies with the covenant of grace, doth, in so doing, act graciously. Thus, he who loves God supremely with moral sincerity, does love God supremely, in reality; but this real supreme love to God is a gracious and holy love to God. And you have already said, "that obedience to God is always holy," "and the obedience of the unrenewed, as holy as any that a gracious man can yield." p. 8. But if so, then this obedience is performed with gracious sincerity, as really as the obedience of any gracious man is. But, if your graceless man does comply with the covenant of grace, in a gracious manner, he will go to heaven along with true saints. And, therefore, that saying of our blessed Saviour is not true—"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

It remains, therefore, that this proposition must pass for a self-evident truth, which cannot but be believed, as soon as it is understood, viz. "A man who knows he has no grace, cannot profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, without wilful lying." You may as well say, that *black is white*, or that *a dead man is alive*, or that a *graceless sinner is a real saint*, as say, that "a man, who knows he has no grace, can profess a compliance with the covenant of grace, honestly and with a good conscience." And, therefore, a man must either not know what he is about, or his conscience must be

very much seared, or he will not dare to profess a compliance with the covenant of grace while he knows he has no grace. Indeed, it is a full proof that a man is to a great degree destitute of moral honesty, if, with his eyes open, he dare to make such a profession. It is at least as gross wickedness as that which Annanias and Sapphira were guilty of, in saying, *This is all the money,* when they knew that *it was not all.* They *lied to the Holy Ghost,* and this man flatters God with his mouth, and lies unto him with his tongue. Psal. lxxviii. 36.

To be consistent, therefore, we must vote the covenant of grace out, in our church, and vote in a graceless covenant in its room, or you cannot be admitted as a member. And if we should vote out the covenant of grace, and vote in a graceless covenant in its room, we should, so far as this vote should have influence, cease to be a visible church of Christ. Nor should we have a visible right to baptism and the Lord's supper, which are seals of the covenant of grace, and of no other covenant. For there are but two covenants which now take place between God and man, viz. the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace. Rom. iii. 27.

P. I am not able to think of this seriously, and to answer it honestly. I have no other way therefore to get rid of the truth, but to misrepresent and ridicule it. p. 5—9. However, I have two objections against this scheme, viz. 1. The church cannot know who do really comply with the covenant of grace. p. 16. Nor, 2. Can any join with the church but those who have full assurance[e]. p. 19.

e Obj. Baptism alone makes me a church-member, or it does not. If it does, then I have a right to the Lord's table: if it does not, then the church have no right to discipline me.

Ans. If baptism alone gives a right to the Lord's table, then all baptised persons in Christendom, young and old, good and bad, the excommunicated not excepted, have an equal right: which none will grant. And if the church have no right to discipline any but those who have a right to come to the Lord's table, then they have no right to discipline any who are guilty of heresy or scandal; for such have no right to come to the Lord's table. The objection is founded on two propositions, both of which are false, even in the judgment of the objector. viz. 1. That baptism alone gives a right to the Lord's table, without any other qualification whatsoever: upon which rule, even the excommunicated cannot be

M. You may find a full answer to these objections in what I have already published on this subject, which you appear not to have attended to. But pray, what rule would you have the church proceed by in the admission of members? Would you have *certain evidence*, that the candidates for admission have the requisite qualifications insisted on by the church?

P. Yes, indeed. For, 'this is my principle, that every man, (asking special ordinances,) is as CERTAINLY qualified to partake of the Lord's supper, as he is to breathe, unless there is CERTAIN EVIDENCE that he is disqualified." p. 16.

M. But one, who is at heart a deist, and who lives secretly in adultery, may, to answer political ends, "ask for special ordinances," and there may be no "certain evidence" of his crimes. Therefore, according to this NEW DIVINITY, this infidel, this adulterer, is as certainly qualified to partake of the Lord's supper, as he is to breathe."

P. Shocking consequence! However, this I lay down for an infallible truth, that all who have visibly entered into covenant, as I have done, "to walk in all God's ways and to keep all his commands," are bound by their own vow to attend special ordinances. p. 10, 11, 12.

M. What! Bound, though they know themselves to be unqualified? Is the abovementioned infidel and adulterer bound? What! bound in the sight of God, and a well-regulated conscience, to come to the Lord's table, as he is? Pray, who bound him? God never did; nor does the vow he publicly made to "walk in all God's ways, and keep all his commands," bind him to come *as he is*. For this is what God *never commanded*.

And it is equally evident, that God never commanded men to make a lying profession in any instance, either verbally or practically. But to seal a covenant is, (practically,) to profess a compliance with it. To seal a covenant, therefore, with which we know we do not comply, is what God, *never*

debarred. 2. That the church have no authority to exercise discipline over any but those who have a right to the Lord's table: upon which rule, those who are disqualified for the Lord's table, by heresy or scandal, are not subjects of discipline.

commanded. Yea, it is what God has forbidden in every text in the bible which forbids lying. So that, if the covenant to be sealed in baptism and the Lord's supper, is the covenant of grace, as you allow it is, then those who know they have no grace, are forbidden to seal it, by every text in the bible which forbids lying. And therefore, that command, *do this in remembrance of me,* is beyond all doubt, a command which respects believers, and them only; agreeable to the publicly professed belief of the church of Scotland, and the churches in New-England, held forth in their public formulas. Indeed it is the duty, the indispensable duty of every one to whom the Gospel comes, and their highest interest, to comply with the covenant of grace, and that on the very first invitation. As soon as the glad tidings come to our ears, *come, for all things are now ready, whosoever will let him come;* we ought not to delay a moment, we ought not to make one excuse, we ought not to feel the least reluctance: no, rather on the contrary, we ought, with Peter's hearers, *to receive the word gladly,* that same day, and to make a public profession and join with the church the first opportunity. Mat. xiii. 44.—And to neglect this, is a sin so great and aggravated, as to expose the neglecters to be given up to God in this world; Luke xiv. 24. and to be cast off for ever in the world to come. Mark xvi. 16. So that your mouth is stopped, and you stand guilty before God. But, to return to a consideration of your visible standing. Pray, sir, was you esteemed a church-member, in full communion, in the town where you lived before you moved into this parish?

P. No, sir, by no body. I never looked upon myself to be a church-member, in this sense of the phrase. I never meant to join with the church, nor did the minister or the church mean to receive me as a church-member, and accordingly, I never met with the church when they had church meetings upon church business. I never staid when the church was desired to stay, as they sometimes were, after worship on sabbaths, and at other times. I never voted when the church were called to give in their vote in any matter whatsoever. Nor had I any right to go to the Lord's table without making a public profession over again, and

thereby *joining with the church*, as the common phrase was. No such thing was allowed where I was brought up. So that I did not think myself a church-member before I moved into this parish, nor was I esteemed and used as a church-member. Yea, it never entered into my heart, to pretend any such thing, till my New-London patron taught me to say so, and to put in these high claims, and to deny my old principles, and contradict myself, and finally, even to deny my own name, and pretend to be another man. And since then I have felt "BRAVELY," and have looked down upon you with great contempt.

M. The more men mock God in religion, the more proud, haughty, and insolent, are they apt to be towards their fellow men. A religion begun in ignorance like yours, and carried on and perfected in this shocking manner, if it may do to live with, yet will not do to die by.

P. Be this as it may; yet to say as you do, "better do nothing than lie," tends to increase the number of prayerless persons, and prayerless families, to put an end to all means, and in the end to overthrow all religion. p. 20.

M. Doth not God himself say, Eccl. v. 5. *Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay*; i. e. in other words, "better do nothing than lie." And will you condemn the Holy One of Israel? Either give up the bible, or abide by its sacred maxims. Besides, there is a difference between *covenanting transactions* and *common means*. And accordingly, Christ ordered his ministers to *preach the Gospel to every creature*; but he did not order them to *baptise every creature*. For,

Graceless sinners may hear the Gospel preached, may hear all the truths and duties of it explained, proved, and urged; and may attend, yea, may be very attentive, and meditate on them day and night, till they *are pricked at the heart*; they may forsake vain and vicious company, become sober, serious, deeply distressed about their eternal welfare. They may spend much time in secret prayer, *(and an awakened sinner cannot fail to do it,)* and frequently spend whole days in fasting and prayer, as Mr. Brainerd used to do, under his terrors, when he was unconverted; pray read his life: I say,

graceless sinners may do all this, without making any profession of godliness. Yea, they may do all this, and yet in all profess that they have no grace, no love to God in their hearts, but are dead in sin.

You insinuate, that the doctrines which I preached tend to licentiousness. I appeal to facts. Look from the reformation down to this day; look through England, Scotland, and Ireland; look through the British colonies in America, and through our West-India islands: and put the question; when and where, and among whom, has there been, or is there now the greatest strictness maintained, and the most constant, diligent, and painful attendance on means? Either, among Calvinists, who heartily agree with the Westminster confession of faith and catechisms, and where these doctrines are taught privately, and preached publicly? or, among Pelagians, Arminians, and Semi-Arminians, who are constantly teaching and preaching in another strain? While the assembly of divines sat at Westminster, composing the formulas, which I am now vindicating, London, that great city, was full of sermons, and prayers, and strictness: but since these doctrines have been laid aside, and contrary doctrines introduced, they are become very licentious and debauched. The more you flatter the sinner, the further will he run from God and all good. But tell him the truth, pierce him to the heart, and he will begin to cry, *What shall I do to be saved?*

P. But can an unconverted sinner say the Lord's prayer, and speak true? i. e. can he profess to God, that he hath all those holy and pious affections in his heart, which our Saviour designed those words to express? p. 12.

M. I also will ask you one question; answer me; and then I will answer you. *Is not the man, who thus says the Lord's prayer, entitled to pardon and eternal life?*

P. No doubt he is. For, our Saviour says, *If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you,* with a design to explain in what sense he meant that petition should be made, *forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.* And besides, in the same sermon, he expressly declares, that *every one that asketh, receiveth.*

M. It therefore follows, that no unconverted man ever

said that prayer, in that sense, unless you will own, what seems to be a necessary consequence of the scheme you are pleading for, that some unconverted men are entitled to pardon and eternal life; which is so contrary to the most plain and express declarations of Scripture, (John iii. 18. 36. Gal. iii. 10.) that as yet, you have not ventured to own it.

Thousands, no doubt, have after a sort said the Lord's prayer, who have fallen short of eternal life. For the papists say the Lord's prayer oftener than protestants do, ten to one, and for every *Pater-Noster* they count a bead. And while sinners are secure in sin, such kind of praying, i. e. using words without any meaning, will quiet their consciences. For they now think they have done their duty. *For without the law sin was dead: and so I was alive without the law once.* But no sooner do they fall under deep convictions, but that they find something else to do. Pray read Mr. Brainerd's life, and there you may see how an awakened sinner feels, and how he prays.

P. Thus far, sir, I have acted the part of a disputant. I have passed over nothing in the New-Haven letter that is new and to the purpose. For this letter-writer has not said one word for my old beloved scheme, *the half-way.* Now therefore, I beg leave to assume the friendly, honest character, which I sustained in my first visit. For let others do as they will, I am resolved to be an honest man. Wherefore, to sum up the whole,

1. I believe, that there is but one covenant, of which baptism and the Lord's supper are seals. And that he that is qualified to offer his children in baptism, is equally qualified for the Lord's table. And therefore, that the half-way practice is not according to Scripture.

2. I believe, that any man who seals any covenant doth, in and by the act of sealing, declare his compliance with that covenant which he seals: because this is the import of the act of sealing.

3. I believe, that it is of the nature of lying, to seal a covenant, with which I do not now, and never did, comply in my heart; but rather habitually and constantly reject. Therefore,

4. I believe, that a man who knows he has no grace, cannot seal the covenant of grace, honestly and with a good conscience.

5. I believe, that the only point which needs to be settled, in order to setttle the whole controversy, is this, viz. Are baptism and the Lord's supper seals of the covenant of grace, or of a graceless covenant?

6. I believe, that there are but two covenants between God and man, called in Scripture language, *the law of works and the law of faith*, but commonly called the *covenant of works*, and the *covenant of grace*. And that the doctrine of an external covenant, distinct from the covenant of grace, is not from heaven, but of men. Thus, sir, you have my creed.

M. Sir, I hope the time will soon come, when you and all my other parishioners, through the country, will well understand the controversy, and be able to judge for yourselves what is truth and what is not so. In the mean time, remember, my friend, that *he that knoweth his master's will and doth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes*. Behold, *now* is the accepted time, and *now* is the day of salvation; therefore *to-day*, if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart. Every moment in which you continue practically to renounce your baptism, by rejecting Christ Jesus and his Gospel, you hang over hell, ready to sink under the curse of the divine law, into eternal burnings. For *he that believeth not is condemned already*. Wherefore, *repent and believe the Gospel*.

Some seem to think that baptism alone makes a man a Christian, and brings him really into the covenant of grace, so as that he is no longer under the covenant of works, as the unbaptised are. But the apostle Paul did not think so. For he, speaking to the baptised Galatians, among whom he feared there were some who were self-righteous, Christless sinners, he says, Gal. iii. 10. *As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse*. "As many," be they circumcised, and baptised too, "as are of the works of the law," as depend on their own works for justification in the sight of God, "are under the curse," even *they are under the curse*; for it is writen, *Cursed is every one*, &c. But if baptism delivers men from the covenant of works, they cannot *any one of*

them be under its curse. For no man is liable to the curse of a law which he is not under. Besides, in this apostle's view of things, it was peculiar to true believers to be really in the covenant of grace, and not under the law as a covenant of works. Rom. vi. 14. *For sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under law, but under grace.* For, according to this scheme of religion, every soul is either *married to the law;* and these *bring forth fruit unto death;* or *married to Christ;* and these *bring forth fruit unto God.* (chap. vii.) Wherefore, know assuredly, that your baptism, although it increases your obligations, and so enhances your guilt; yet it alone gives you not the least right to any one of the peculiar blessings of the covenant of grace, so as at all to exempt you from the curse of the law; but you are now, this moment, in fact, as liable to be struck dead and sent to hell, by the divine justice, as any unbaptised sinner in the land. And should you die in the state you are now in, you would most certainly be damned along with the unbaptised heathen: only your hell would be hotter than theirs. Mat. xi. 20—24. For *if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.* Rom. ii. 25.——Wherefore I advise you,

First of all, immediately to repent of your sins, and return to God through Jesus Christ, looking only to free grace through him for pardon and eternal life. For I testify unto you, that if you trust in your baptism to recommend you to God, Christ shall profit you nothing. Gal. v. 2. Wherefore, give up this, and all your other self-righteous claims, and apply to the mere, pure free grace of God, through Jesus Christ, as all your hope For, as to acceptance with God, *there is no difference* between the circumcised Jew and the uncircumcised Greek, or between the baptised nominal Christian and an unbaptised Indian. Rom. iii. 22. If you will thus *repent and believe the Gospel,* and in this way, not in falsehood, but in truth, "avouch the Lord Jehovah to be your sovereign Lord and supreme good, through Jesus Christ," you shall, in fact, have your choice, that is, have God for your God and portion in time and eternity. This, my dear Parishioner, this is the way to take upon you your baptismal

covenant, and to get delivered from the curse of the covenant of works, and to enter into the covenant of grace, in reality and in truth. This therefore do without delay. And having done this, then make a public profession of religion, and join yourself to God's people, and bring your dear child and dedicate it to the same God to whom you have dedicated yourself. And let it be the business of your life to bring up that, and your other children, in *the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

And now, as you travel through the country, for I understand you are become a great traveller, and gain admittance into all companies, and among men of all denominations and character, I advise you to use your utmost influence to diffuse a friendly spirit every where, among all your acquaintance, in this controversy. Particularly, urge it upon parishioners of your acquaintance, to treat their ministers in a respectful manner, while they apply to them for light and instruction, or when they undertake to dispute these points with them; especially, wherever your influence extends, let no man on our side of the question, treat his minister ill because he is in the opposite scheme. It is not manly, it is not Christian-like, it is not prudent, to do it. For there is no way to promote truth so effectually, as to hold forth light in love; and to treat your opponents in a kind and friendly manner. For my part, I have an high esteem for many in the ministry, who differ in their practice in the admission of persons to sealing ordinances for themselves and for their children, from what I think is right. For it is a controversy which has not been attended to, nor is it an easy thing, at once, to get rid of the prejudices of education, and in the face of a frowning world to espouse the true Scripture plan. I have great hopes, however, that ere long we shall think and act nearer alike, when there has been sufficient time to understand one another, to weigh and deliberate, to get rid of the prejudices of education, &c. &c. In the mean time, I most earnestly desire, that the controversy may be carried on, in the most open, fair, honest, cool, calm, friendly manner possible.

Who this *letter-writer* is, is not known by the public, as he has secreted his name. And whether it was with design,

or through inadvertance, that he hath given up the doctrine of total depravity, as held forth in Scripture and in our public formulas, I shall not determine. Perhaps, on second thoughts, he will retract every thing he hath said, which hath that aspect. I wish he may. But if it should come to pass, as I fear it will, that in the course of this controversy, numbers should openly fall off to the Arminian scheme, in order to defend their lax manner of admission to sealing ordinances, I advise you, to keep by you and to spread every where among your acquaintance, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and larger and shorter Catechisms: a book which will be of excellent service to teach people sound doctrine, and to guard them against Arminian errors.

To conclude: I shall always retain a most grateful sense of your kind treatment of your minister, *when acting yourself*, and be always ready to do every kind office in my power, which either you, or any other of my parishioners, shall need at my hands. I esteem it among the great blessings of my life, that I live in a parish, and among a people, so well disposed to treat a minister with that respect which is due to his office. And I hope you may never find me wanting in any instance of kind and friendly conduct towards you. I wish you the best of heaven's blessings.—My dear parishioner, Adieu.

EARLY PIETY RECOMMENDED;

OR, THE

OBLIGATIONS TO EARLY PIETY,

AND THE

NECESSITY OF RENOUNCING YOUTHFUL VANITY,

REPRESENTED IN

A DISCOURSE on Eccles. xii. 1.

DELIVERED AT STRATFIELD, OCTOBER 7, 1747.

Mat. vii. 13, 14. Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate, and narrow the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

EARLY PIETY RECOMMENDED.

ECCLESIASTES xii. 1.

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.

THERE are many considerations of very great weight, to awaken our mind to a holy reverence and most sacred attention, when we read or hear the word of God. It is the word of God, the infinitely great and glorious God, the supreme Lord and sovereign Governor of the whole world; whose are *all things*, and whose *we are*, and who has a *right* to command us; the God that angels fear, and to whose voice they always hearken with the deepest reverence, esteeming all his injunctions most sacred. And besides, *all* that he speaks to us is calculated not only for his *own glory*, but also for *our best good*. As the kind Father of our spirits, in his infinite wisdom he marks out that path for us to go in, which is not only right and fit in itself, but also suited to render us most happy. His laws are all *holy, just, and good*. And that he may reach our hearts the more effectually, he singles out particular cases, and adapts himself to the particular tempers and circumstances of the children of men. He knows just how it is with mankind, how they feel, what their hearts are apt to be set upon, and what their temptations and dangers are, and how to speak a word in season to every soul. So of old he used to deal with the children of *Israel*: all the nations round about them were idolaters, and worshipped their gods under some visible form. And he knew what temptations his people would be under to do as others did, and conform to the common mode. How often, therefore, and how solemnly, by Moses and by the prophets, does he warn them to beware, lest at any time they should be led away from the Lord their God to other gods, or to worship *him* under some visible form, as the heathen nations round about did *their deities*. So here in our text, he admonishes persons in their *youth*.

He knows the temper and temptations of young people; how apt they are to be unmindful of the God that made them, and to forsake their own mercies to follow after lying vanities, and run into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. He sees them, he pities them; and as the *great Governor* of the world, and the *kind Father* of their spirits, he calls after them, reproves and warns them. "*Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men.* Stop! hearken! consider! No longer forget the God that made you; be not unmindful of the hand that formed you, and holds your soul in life, nor delay any longer; but REMEMBER NOW *thy Creator in the days of thy youth.*" As if he had said, "I see what your temper is, I know what your thoughts are, what your temptations, and what your danger: you are inclined to have no sense of God upon your spirit, to give a loose to your vain imaginations, to indulge wanton affections, and put far away all serious thoughts; flattering yourselves with vain hopes of a better time hereafter. The world looks gay to you, and your companions entice you along: but verily that road leads to eternal ruin. I see you, and know the way you take; I pity you, I call to you, I warn you, I command you, *remember thy Creator*; be mindful of God *now*, without any further delay, *in the days of thy youth.*" And should not young people hearken when God thus speaks to them, and attend with the utmost solemnity! Especially, considering that all this is in and through Jesus Christ, the Mediator. For so bad were we, and such were our guilty circumstances, that we cannot in any reason suppose the great and *holy Governor* of the world would have had any thing to do with us in a way of mercy, but for the interposition of a Mediator. It would have been a reproach to the holy Majesty of heaven and earth, to have ever spoken one kind word to a *guilty world*, but for the mediatorial undertaking of his own Son. It would have been inconsistent with the honour of his Majesty, of his holiness and justice, and sacred authority; because, by our apostacy from God, we were become too bad to be pitied, too bad to have any mercy shown us; so bad, that every thing was too good for us, that was better than damnation. Such was

our deplorable case! But the Son of God has interposed as Mediator, to secure his Father's honour, and to open a door for mercy. He was made of a woman, made under the law; has obeyed, suffered, and died, to make atonement for sin by his blood, and to bring in everlasting righteousness. In his obedient life and death, the holiness and justice of God have received perfect satisfaction, and the honour of his law and government is secured; that now the great Governor of the world may show favour to sinners, and yet not so much as seem to be a favourer of sin. Hence he has reprieved this guilty world from ruin, and entered upon methods of grace, to recover sinners to himself. And shall we not now hearken, to any kind word he speaks, and attend to every command with all our hearts!—O that these thoughts which have been suggested, might awaken us all, and particularly every youth in the assembly, to attend with the utmost solemnity of mind, while we take the words of our text into serious consideration! They are immediately spoken to you that are in your youth, and that from God, the great Governor and Judge of the world. In this warning he seeks your welfare; and it is the precious blood of Christ, which has purchased for you the mercy of this call from God. That I may assist you to dwell a while upon these words in serious thoughts to better advantage, I will observe this method in the following discourse:

1. I will endeavour to show what is implied in remembering God.

2. What obligations young people are under to this.——

And,

3. Offer some directions and motives.

I am,

1. To show what is implied in remembering GOD. And in general, it is a heart-affecting, soul-transforming, vital, efficacious remembrance of God, that is here recommended; and not any mere empty, dry, lifeless notion of God in the head. It is such a remembrance of God, or such a sense of God on the heart, as effectually divorces and weans us from all other things, and influences us to love him with all our hearts, to choose him for our portion, take up our contentment in him as our ALL, and devote ourselves to him, to walk in all

his ways, and keep all his commands, seeking his glory as our end. For when God requires us to know him, to think of him, to acknowledge him, or to remember him, he always means, as our Saviour more plainly expresses it, (when speaking of love to God,) that it should *be with our heart, and with our soul, and with our mind. and with our strength.* And hence those that do not thus remember God, do in Scripture-account forget the Lord, and God is said to be *not in all their thoughts:* yea, the Scriptures carry the point so far, as to express it thus, *the fool hath said in his heart, there is no God;* because wicked men in their security, although they are not professed atheists, yet they practically *deny the God that is above,* and feel at heart as if there was no God; for they do not worship him in spirit and in truth; they do not come to him in and by Christ; they do not love him, nor fear him, nor trust in him; but they feel, and act, and live, as if in very deed there was no God; and hence they are said to be *without God in the world. Faith without works is dead,* saith St. James: and that remembrance of God which is unaffecting, and inefficacious, is dead, and good for nothing.

But to be particular,

1. Remembering God implies, that we *know him,* that we have *right apprehensions of him,* that we *see him to be just such an one as he is.* For we cannot with any propriety be said to remember that God, whom we do not know: and if we have wrong apprehensions of God, though we think of him ever so much, yet it is not God that we remember, but only that false image we have framed in our own fancy. A right remembering of God therefore supposes, that he who commands the light to shine out of darkness, shineth into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the *glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;* and that we with open face behold as in a glass, (in the glass of his works and of his word, of the law and of the Gospel,) *the glory of the Lord;* so as to take in that very representation of God which he himself has made.

2. Remembering of God implies, that we have a *vital sense of God in our hearts;* a realizing, living sense of his Being and perfections, that we see and feel there is a God, and

such an one as he really is: a Being of infinite understanding, and almighty power, of infinite wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth; and so a being of infinite majesty and greatness, of boundless glory and excellency, absolutely, worthy to be esteemed, and loved, and feared, trusted in and obeyed, for what he is in himself. Such a sense of God on our hearts is necessarily implied in remembering of God; and seems indeed to be that in which it primarily and principally consists. To forget God, and to be without such a sense of God on our hearts, seems to be much the same thing in Scripture-account. Beware, says Moses to the children of Israel, "that thou forget not the Lord thy God, when thou hast eaten, and art full," encompassed about with all the good things of this world; *but thou shalt* then *remember the Lord thy God*, &c. Deut. viii. 11—18. As if he had said, "Innumerable methods have been taken with you in the wilderness, to beget in you a sense of God; beware then that you do not lose this sense of God, when you come into that good land, and have plenty of all things." Then do persons remember God, when they daily have a living sense of God on their hearts; a living sense of his all-seeing eye and all-governing hand, a living sense of his glorious moral excellency and infinite all-sufficiency. This will make the thoughts of God natural and free, genuine and unforced. He will become the object of our continual devout contemplation. We shall think of him wherever we be; at home or abroad, in company or alone. In the day-time our hearts will be with him, and in the night season. On our beds we shall remember him, and when we awake in the morning we shall still be with him. Having *tasted that the Lord is gracious*, the Saviour of his grace will lie always on our spirits, in some degree.

3. Remembering God, also implies a sort of forgetting all other things. It includes in its idea a taking our eyes off from ourselves, and losing a sense of our own fancied excellcies; a turning away our eyes from beholding vanity, a losing sight of the glory of this world, and losing our relish for carnal and worldly delights; ourselves and all things about us appearing infinitely mean in our eyes, compared with God.

It implies a hearty divorce from ourselves, and from all other things, out of a superlative love to God. *Forget thine own people, and thy Father's house,* Ps. xlv. 10. A living sense of God on our hearts will naturally beget this spiritual weanedness from all other things. A sense of his greatness and glory will make us, (like Job,) to *abhor ourselves,* and comparatively to *loath life* under its highest temporal advantages, all earthly grandeur appearing mean and worthless to us. A sense of God's infinite beauty and excellency will make all the gay and enchanting things of this world fade away into insignificant and empty toys; and the sweetness there is in the enjoyment of him, will for ever spoil our relish for worldly lusts and the pleasures of sin. So that a due *sense of God* will effectually deaden us to all other things. *Yea, what things were gain to us,* this will make us to *account but loss and dung, that we may win Christ,* and God in him. This is necessarily implied in remembering God.

Surely, those cannot be said to remember God, who are always full of themselves, full of a sense of their own goodness, and are dwelling for ever upon their own high attainments; ready always to say, *God, I thank thee, I am not as other men!* Such may be said to remember their own duties, or their own experiences and good frames. But in the Scripture-sense, *God is not in all their thoughts.* Neither can those be said to remember God, who are full of a sense of the glory of this present world, full of worldly views and worldly schemes, and only seek after worldly and sensual enjoyments. *No man can serve two masters,* says our Saviour; ye cannot serve God and Mammon. Ye cannot remember God, whilst your hearts are full of other things, and entirely wedded to them. If young people would remember God, they must be brought to have just such a temper of mind towards all youthful lusts, and carnal sports and vanities, as old Barzillai had towards the entertainments of David's court; that is, no relish, no heart for them. "I am this day, says he, fourscore years old. And can I discern between good and evil? Can thy servant taste what I eat, and what I drink? Can I hear any more the voice of singing men, or singing women? Wherefore let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again; that I may die in

my own city." 2 *Sam.* xix. 34—37. To love youthful vanities and sensual pleasures, is inconsistent with remembering God. *Whosoever will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God,* (James iv. 4.) Such are they who are *lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God.* Persons of this character cannot possibly be such as remember God. The hearts of young people must therefore be divorced from all their beloved pleasures and carnal merriments; or else there can never be any room for God in their souls. Thus a remembering of God implies that all other things are set light by, and are in a sense out of mind and forgotten. They are in a manner quite done with; the heart being otherwise taken up.

4. Remembering God also implies, *that we choose him as our chief good, and are devoted to him, to seek his glory, as our last end.* That we bid adieu to all other lords and lovers, and cleave to him only as the satisfying portion of our souls. That we renounce all other masters, and become his servants in the very temper of our hearts, steadfastly bent to do his will, to walk in his ways, and keep all his commands; seeking his glory as our supreme end. When we look upon God as a satisfying portion, and take contentment in him, as such; when we look upon God as a being infinitely worthy, and as such are entirely devoted to him, accounting it the chief end of man to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever; then do we remember God in deed and in truth. Nor will any thing short of this effectually keep our hearts from departing from God, and growing unmindful of him. Mat. vi. 21. *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* And a due sense of God on our hearts will effectually influence us to choose him and adhere to him. It did so influence the Psalmist, when he said, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides thee? Thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. Ps. lxxiii. 25, 26. It did so influence the primitive Christians, who could say, *Whether we live, we live to the Lord, or whether we die, we die to the Lord. Rom.* xiv. 8. It was a maxim with them in those happy days, *Whether they did eat, or drink, or whatever they did, to do all to the glory of God.* 1 *Cor.* x. 31. And

when God comes to be truly remembered by us, to be uppermost in our hearts, it will be our maxim too.

In a word, this remembering God, implies in it both the principle and practice of "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ: a turning to God from all idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven;" a thorough conversion to God, and a good conversation in Christ.

Thus, remembrance of God supposes, that we know him, that we have right apprehensions of him, that we see him to be just such an one as he is; that we have a living sense of God on our hearts; that we become strangers and pilgrims on earth in the temper of our minds, dead to ourselves, weaned from the world; that we look out towards another and a better country, even an heavenly, and that we cleave to God with all our hearts, and are consecrated to him, to do his will, and seek his glory. And a due remembrance of God will make Christ precious to the soul, will afford powerful inducements to *live by the faith of the Son of God*, and lay a foundation for all holy living. We shall love to think on his name, to read and hear his word, and to keep it, *to live* a life of conformity to him, and of communion with him. If young people remembered God as they ought, they would esteem "a day in his courts better than a thousand elsewhere." And one evening spent in prayer alone, would be better to them than a thousand spent in vain company abroad. And such children will love, and honour, and obey their parents, and be kind and endearing in their behaviour to all. Happy parents, that have such children! And happy children, that thus remember their Creator in the days of their youth! We are now,

II. To consider the obligations that young people are under, thus to remember God their Creator in the days of their youth. And,

1. They are under infinite obligations to do so, *arising from the consideration of what* GOD *is, in* HIMSELF. To forget and slight things, that are mean and worthless, is no evil: but for children to forget and slight their parents, especially if they are knowing and wise, holy and good, argues a very

bad temper of mind. But to forget and slight God, the infinitely great and glorious God, the glory of heaven, the joy of angels and saints—this is infinitely wicked.

GOD is infinitely glorious and excellent in himself, as being what he is, antecedent to any consideration of what he has done, or intends to do for us. Holy men, such as Moses, David, and Paul, are excellent and amiable, *in being what they are, in having such a holy temper of mind.* Angels and saints in heaven are still more excellent, on the same account. But God is the original infinite fountain of all perfection and excellency: In a word, he is *by nature* GOD. Hence, from being conscious to his own divinity, from seeing himself what he is, he takes state to himself, asserts his exalted character, as he whose name alone is JEHOVAH, the living and true God, saying, *I am the Lord, and besides me there is no other God.* Isai. xlv. 5. It would be infinite wickedness for an angel to set up himself for God: but this conduct is infinitely right, and fit, and beautiful in him, who is *by nature God.* And on this ground he commands all the world to fear, love, and adore him: and he esteems the wretch who does not do so with all his heart, worthy of everlasting damnation. Infinite goodness itself accounts the eternal torments of hell a punishment but just equal to the crime. How often does he say, in the five books of Moses, O Israel, thou shalt do thus and thus, FOR I AM THE LORD? Nearly twenty times is this repeated in one chapter, (Lev. 19.) thus and thus shall ye do, FOR I AM THE LORD. This is the first thing mentioned in the ten commandments, Exod. xx. *I am the* LORD THY GOD, &c. which teaches us, that because he is the Lord, &c. therefore we are bound to keep all his commandments. And as our Saviour expresseth it in Matt. xxii. 37. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.* His being the Lord, his being by nature God, his being what he is in himself, is the grand and primary foundation of his infinite amiableness: this ought therefore to be the grand and primary foundation of our love to him. And from hence we are under infinite obligations to love him with all our hearts, always to remember him, to live under a sense of his being and perfections, to be divorced from all other things, to

choose him as our ALL, and seek his glory as our last end. And it is infinitely wrong not to do so.

We are under many obligations from self-love to remember God, to love him, and be devoted to him; for he is our *Creator, Preserver,* and *great Benefactor.* And besides, to love him with all our hearts, and seek his glory in all we do, is the most delightful thing on earth; it is a pleasure, near akin to heaven.

But antecedent to those, and to all other selfish considerations whatsoever, there is an infinite obligation lying upon us to love him with all our hears, to remember him, to cleave to him, and so seek his glory, resulting from *his being what he is in himself,* his being by nature God, the original infinite fountain of all moral good and moral excellency. Whence to forget him is infinitely wrong, and so justly deserves an infinite punishment.

If we were under no obligation but what results from self-love, then the great and the only evil of sin would consist in its being contrary to our own interest and happiness; for there is no evil in sin but what results from our obligations to do otherwise. And if our happiness was all that obliged us to virtue, then there could be no other evil in vice, but its natural tendency to make us miserable; that is, there would be no evil in sin, as it is against God and contrary to the reason and nature of things; but only and merely as it is against us, and contrary to our own interest. And hence sinners could be considered by the great Governor of the world as being to blame, in no other respect, or upon no other account, than merely as doing what wrongs themselves, and is contrary to their own interest. So much as they hurt their own interest, so much therefore would they be to blame, and no more; they would be blameable merely for that, and upon no other account. But it is certain, that God thinks them *infinitely to blame over and above all that,* or else he would never inflict an infinite punishment upon them, over and above all the misery which necessarily results from the nature of vice. If there were no evil in sin, but as it is against us, and not as it is against God, there would be no room nor just ground for his *everlasting wrath,* and for *the lake of fire*

and brimstone, which he has threatened to the wicked; for no crime deserves to be punished, but only in proportion to its *blame-worthiness*. But upon this hypothesis, sin is *blame-worthy*, merely because of its natural tendency to make us miserable: and therefore, in this view of the case, sin can deserve no other punishment, but merely that misery which necessarily results from its own nature. No inflicted misery, i. e. no proper punishment, is at all deserved.

But God thinks, that the least sin deserves everlasting damnation; even the least defect in our love, the lest unmindfulness of God.—And why? Because, being conscious to his own nature and infinite excellency, he knows that his intelligent creatures are under infinite obligations thence arising, antecedent to any consideration else whatsoever, to love him with all their hearts, to remember him, to have a constant sense of him on their spirits, so as to be divorced from all other things, and be entirely devoted to him [a].

a If there is an *infinite moral excellency* in the divine nature, upon the account of which he is *infinitely amiable*, and so we under *infinite obligations* to love him with all our hearts, antecedent to all selfish considerations; then not to love him with all our hearts is an *infinite evil*, and so deserves an *infinite punishment*. And upon this ground the eternity of hell torments may be accounted for. But if there is no such excellency in the divine nature; and if all our obligations to love and obey him result merely from self-love, then I think the above argument conclusive, *nor can I see how the eternity of hell torments can possibly be accounted for.*

Learned men, who leave *this excellency* of the divine nature out of their idea of God, seem to have been aware of this difficulty, and they have laboured to solve it; but all in vain.

Some consider God as the sovereign Lord of life and death, vested with all power and authority. And they say, things are right merely because he wills to have them so. But I answer, it is impossible that he should will the everlasting damnation of sinners, if they do not deserve it. Because that would be to act counter to his own nature. See Gen. xviii. 25.

Some consider God as aiming at the *general good* of the whole system of intelligent creatures, as his *last end*. And they say, that it is for the general good of the whole, that the wicked should be everlastingly tormented in hell; because such severity will tend to confirm the rest in everlasting obedience. But I answer, if the wicked do not in justice deserve the eternal torments of hell, their being so treated will rather tend to dishonour God in the eyes of all the angels and saints in heaven, and tempt them to cast off their allegiance to him, to flee from his presence, and conceive a hatred of him, just as we naturally detest a merciless and cruel tyrant. And besides, God, who has forbid us to *do evil that good may come*, most certainly will not do this himself.

I have insisted upon this the longer, because many seem to leave this *moral excellency* of the divine nature out of their idea of God; and consider him only as the author of their happiness, as one disposed to exert his infinite wisdom and almighty power to promote their best good, and only *as such* do they love him: and so all their love to God is nothing but *self-love*, in another shape. And consequently, all *their religion is vain*, a mere selfish thing; a religion that God never meant, that the law never required, and that the Gospel never taught.

We will suppose, there is a man, who formerly was greatly awakened, and trembled for fear of divine wrath; but since then, he has had his heart full of love to God and Christ, and now doubts not he is going to heaven. But whence did this man's love to God and Christ first take its rise? Why, he had it discovered to him, (as he thought,) by the Spirit of God,

Again, some seem to suppose, that there will be no *proper punishment* inflicted upon the damned in hell; that they will have no other torment but what necessarily results from the nature of vice; that they will be a torment to themselves, but shall have no additional punishment. But, I answer, this notion is directly contrary to all the New Testament, which every where sets the case in a very different light. *Everlasting punishment*, the *damnation of hell, a lake of fire and brimstone, the indignation and wrath of God*, &c. are constantly threatened to the wicked. And particularly, God is said *to show his wrath and make his power known in their destruction*. Rom. ix. 22. All which phrases evidently denote a proper inflicted punishment.

Others have taken another course, and have ventured even to *deny the eternity of hell torments*. But they may as reasonably, and had as good, deny the Scriptures to be the *word of God*. For nothing can be more plainly and fully asserted. *Their worm shall not die, their fire shall never be quenched, the smoke of their torments shall ascend for ever and ever*, &c. &c. without the least hint, that such phrases are not to be understood in their most natural sense, as denoting the infinite duration of their punishment.

So that the eternity of hell-torments cannot be denied; nor can this be accounted for upon the hypothesis, *That all our obligations to love and obey God result merely from self-love*. And yet if the moral excellency of the divine nature be granted, and our infinite obligations, thence arising, to love him with all our hearts, antecedent to any selfish consideration, then surely the Arminian and Antinomian schemes of religion must both be false. For upon the principles of either of these schemes, all religion results merely from self-love; nor do they seem to have any just notion of the moral excellency of the divine nature, or of our infinite obligations to love and obedience thence arising. If the reader desires to see more upon this subject, let him read Mr. EDWARDS upon *Religious Affections*, from page 134 to page 182.

that his sins were pardoned, or that he was elected, or that Christ died for him, or that God loved him, or that Christ loved him, and he was assured of eternal life. And so he was filled full of love, and rapturous joy: just as the graceless Israelites were filled at the side of the Red sea, when they saw Pharaoh and his army drowned, and themselves delivered. And now this man admires God, and magnifies Christ; but still all is, *at bottom*, merely from *self-love*. There is no more true grace in his heart now, than there was before. And when such an one comes to find out, after death, what God is, and how he always looked upon him, and when he hears that sentence, *Depart from me, I never knew you*, he will then find his love turn into hatred; will hate God with all his heart, and blaspheme his name for ever. Such an one does not love God at all, for what he *is in himself*, or on the account of that in which his infinite amiableness truly consists: but false apprehensions of God are the ground of his love. He only loves a *false image* of God, formed in his own fancy. But as for JEHOVAH, the God of Israel, the man neither knows nor cares for him. See 2 Cor. xi. 14. Matth. xiii. 25, 39.

And there is another man, we will suppose, who is a great enemy to all spiritual experiences; but who, as he thinks, loves God sincerely, yea, has always loved God, and imagines it is in a measure natural to him to love God. But why does he love God? and what a God is it that he loves? Truly, it is the *God that loves him*, and loves all mankind, and is heartily engaged to make all his creatures happy, as his ultimate end. And who, (says he,) can help loving so good and kind a Being? And besides, if I go on to love him as well as ever I can, he has assured me of his final favour and eternal life. And thus, he also having framed a god in his own imagination, to suit his humour, he now idolizes the image which he has set up. This man seems to have no just notion of the infinite holiness, and justice of the divine nature, and his infinite excellency on that account; but fancies within himself a God all made up of mere goodness and love: and it is natural to him to love such a kind and benevolent Being; self-love prompts him to it. Only false ap-

prehensions of God are the ground of his love. The *Holy One* of Israel, instead of making the happiness of a worm of the dust his *ultimate end*, values the honour of his moral perfections above the happiness of all worlds. And when self-deceived sinners come to be in hell, they will know, that God does not aim at their happiness as his *ultimate end*, but that the honour of *his own name*, which is holy and reverend, is infinitely dearer to him. And then their pretended love to God will die away, and all come to nothing; then they will feel themselves *haters of God*, and turn everlasting blasphemers of him. While the whole host of heaven will still cleave to him, and love and praise him, for that wherein his most amiable beauty consists, even the infinite excellency of his *moral perfections*. See Isai. vi. 3. Rev. iv. 8. and chap. xix. 1—6.

Now, on the account of *this original, underived, immense, moral dignity and glory of the divine nature*, are all mankind under *infinite obligations* to fear and love God, to *remember their Creator*, and so to esteem him, as to renounce all other things, and cleave to him only with all their hearts, and be for ever entirely devoted to him. On this account, primarily and first of all, antecedently to all other considerations, are young people under *infinite obligations to remember now their Creator in the days of their youth.*

If God be not considered as being what he is, all other considerations put together would not make it half so wicked a thing to forget the Lord. But under that view of him, it appears a conduct utterly inexcusable, altogether intolerable, infinitely vile. Every moment's unmindfulness of God merits the eternal torments of hell. It is really so; for God would never threaten everlasting damnation for the least sin, if the least sin did not really deserve it: since there can be nothing like tyranny in his government, or cruelty in his nature. It is worse, it is infinitely worse, O young people, to be *unmindful of God*, than you are wont to imagine! It is so heinous and provoking an evil, that the kindest angel in heaven could not find in his heart to bear with you one hour, were he able to see this sin fully in the same light that God does. It is infinitely wicked; and so too much for any but infinite patience to bear with. Think of it, O young man!

Think of it, O young woman! And tremble to see what the frame of your heart has been! Be ashamed of all your past forgetfulness of God: and *remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.*

2. If young people seriously consider *what they themselves are,* their obligation to *remember God in their youth,* will further appear. Young people are under exceeding great obligations, to have a sense of God on their hearts, to sit loose to all other things, to cleave to the Lord, and be entirely devoted to him, arising from the consideration *of their being what they be,* i. e. rational creatures, born to an endless existence, and capable, by divine grace, to know and love God, and be everlastingly blessed in the enjoyment of him. Had they nothing beyond a mortal brutal nature, they might live as the beasts do; never think of God, delight only in animal pleasures, spend their days in wantonness and all carnal sports and pastimes: But in the reason of things, it is entirely unfit for human creatures, that have immortal spirits, to do so. The same minds which are taken up with a thousand foolish vanities, might be employed in contemplating the infinitely glorious God, his works, and his word. The same hearts, which are wedded to the world and the flesh, captivated with the objects of sense, and carried out after mean, sordid, and brutal pleasures, might be full of divine light and life, of love to God, and joy in the Holy Ghost. The hours that are spent in vain company, might be spent in communion with God. The same time that is spent in fitting themselves for an eternal hell, might be spent in preparing for an eternal heaven. And for rational creatures thus to abuse themselves by serving divers lusts and pleasures, is to degrade their own nature, to despise their own souls, and to affront the God that made them of an order of beings superior to the beasts that perish. They are rational agents by creation, but they practically choose to be beasts. They are capable of being made partakers of the divine nature and of divine pleasures, but they prefer the brutal nature, and brutal pleasures. And is not this infinitely absurd, and infinitely wicked! Surely, since they have souls, and are rational creatures, they ought to aspire after the knowledge and enjoyment of

GOD; of GOD, the proper center of every intelligent being. If they would show themselves men, they ought to remember GOD their Creator in the days of their youth.

3. Their obligations to remember God will appear still greater, if it be considered, "what an original, underived, entire right, he has to them, as the work of his hands, and the care of his constant providence."

Were they perfectly their own, then if they did throw away themselves, it would not be so bad. But they are not their own, they are the Lord's, they are his entirely. Him, therefore, they are bound to acknowledge and remember; his must they be in the very temper and bent of their minds; to him must they live, and *not to themselves.*

GOD is absolutely the first Being, self-existent and independent, the original fountain of all being, the author and preserver of all things that are. He it is that created the heavens and the earth; and all things therein are the work of his hands: He is the great Father of the whole universe. But for him these things would never have been; and but for him, they would cease to be. Now since they do thus exist of his mere good pleasure, and as the effects of his almighty power, surely he has an absolute property in them; he has an original, underived, entire right to all things; his they are: and it is fit, infinitely fit and reasonable, therefore, that all things should be for him, and that he should receive a revenue of glory from all. Hence the heavenly hosts fall down before him, and cast their crowns before his throne, and worship him as the *Lord of all,* saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." Rev. iv. 10, 11. And since young people, in common with all other created beings, are thus entirely the Lord's, it is infinitely fit that they should know and feel this to be the case, in the very bottom of their hearts; and from a deep sense of this, be influenced to remember God, and give up themselves to be his; his in a peculiar sense.

Parents have a kind of right to their children; they call hem their own, and look upon them in a measure at their

disposal, and under their authority. And children ought to feel their parents' interest in them, to own themselves in some sense theirs, and at their disposal, and to be devoted to please and honour them, and do their will. But the parents' right is only a secondary, derived, and partial right: their children are the Lord's originally, and only lent to them; they are the Lord's by an underived, supreme, absolute, and entire right. He made them, his hands formed them, he is the Father of their spirits, and he holds their souls in life. Parents were instrumental to their existence; but God was the proper Author of their being. Parents have been instrumental to feed and clothe them; but the food and raiment were the Lord's, and from him they derived all their virtue to nourish and cherish them. And the parents themselves were not their own, but the Lord's, and acted but in subordination to him, and with an entire dependence on his providence and blessing. So that parents have, comparatively, but a small claim to their children, but an inferior interest in them; they are not strictly their parents' property, but are only lent to them for a while. Yea, in some sense, parents have no right at all to their children, they are so entirely the Lord's still. They are as much the Lord's as if they had been immediately created out of nothing, and as if they had always received all their food and raiment immediately out of heaven. In a word, they are his by a sovereign, original, perfect right. And this his entire right to them is renewed every moment, in virtue of his sustaining and preserving them. For *in him they live, move, and have their being*. And were it not for his providence, themselves, and this world and all things in it, would instantly dissolve and fall into nothing. Now, since they are entirely the Lord's in fact, they ought also to be entirely his in the temper and disposition of their minds; to look on themselves as his, and accordingly to *yield themselves to the Lord*, to have no will but his, and no delight but in pleasing him. To forget God, therefore, and not live to him, but to themselves, is infinitely wrong. With a special eye to this consideration, the words of our text seem to have been spoken; *remember now* thy Creator, *in the days of thy youth*.

4. Young people are under infinite obligations to remember now their Creator in the days of their youth, arising from the consideration of *the authority of God, the great Governor of the world, who enjoins this upon them as their indispensable duty.* Since God is what he is, and since he has made and does preserve all things; it is fit, infinitely fit, that he should sustain the character of *supreme Lord and sovereign Governor of the whole world;* and it is infinitely fit, that all his intelligent creatures should have a most sacred regard to his authority. When therefore he enjoins any thing upon angels or men, they are under infinite obligations to the most ready and perfect obedience. But God, the great Governor of the world, does with all his authority command young people to *remember now their Creator in the days of their youth.*

He is infinitely glorious in himself, and so infinitely worthy of their highest esteem. And it is therefore infinitely fit that all their powers should be exerted in contemplating and loving God, the best of beings, and the proper object of their happiness. And besides, they are the Lord's; they are *not their own,* they entirely belong to him; and so it is infinitely fit that they should be his, in the temper and bent of their minds entirely devoted to him.

But the great Governor of the world looks down and sees they are naturally disposed to have no regard to the reason of things, to what is right and fit, and suited to make them happy. He sees them, he knows their hearts, he abhors their unholy unreasonable temper, and pities poor creatures running to ruin. With the authority and compassion of a God, he calls aloud to the young person in particular, *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.*

And for them to tread under foot the rightful authority of such a God, whom all in heaven reverence and fear, love and obey; and to break such a law, so reasonable in itself, and so well suited to their welfare, is big with rebellion; it argues high contempt of the Majesty of heaven, and the greatest folly and madness.

If one should pretend to command them, who had no right to them, nor authority over them; they might reasonably feel themselves at liberty, his command notwithstanding. But

if their parents command them to do what is right and fit, they are no longer at liberty; they are obliged to obey. Much more when God commands them; the infinitely great and glorious God, the great Governor of the whole world, whose they are; their obligations to obedience now are in proportion to the dignity and authority of him who commands; i. e. they are infinite. And they are so far from being left at liberty, that they are bound and obliged by all the authority of heaven to do what is enjoined. And there is no other way now by which they can proceed in a course of disobedience, but to lift up themselves above God, and set up their wills above his, and despise his authority, and bid defiance to his vindictive justice. And surely this is a terrible course for a worm of the dust to venture upon, who is every moment in the hands of God, and liable by his resistless power to be crushed to hell in an instant. Think of this, O young man; think of this, O young woman, and tremble to see what the frame of your heart has been; and hearken to the voice of God, and *remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth!*

5. Young people are under infinite obligations to remember now their Creator in the days of their youth, arising from the consideration of "the undertaking, death, and sufferings of JESUS CHRIST, the great Mediator, and of the tenders of pardon and eternal life, that are made to a guilty undone world through him."

Mankind had apostatized from God, forgotten him, lost a sense of his glory, and plunged themselves into a state of sin and misery, out of which they could by no means recover themselves. They lay in the open field, pulluted and perishing in their blood and guilt; without any eye to pity, or arm to save; self-ruined, self-destroyed! And when this was the case, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. He set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sin, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." And now God is in and through him *reconciling the world to himself.* All are invited

and called upon and commanded to repent and be converted, to change their minds, and turn to the Lord, and give up themselves to God through Jesus Christ. God is reconcileable, and is using means actually to reconcile the world to himself. And this being the case, we are all under new obligations to bethink ourselves, and remember God, whom we have forgotten and forsaken, and return and give up ourselves to him through Jesus Christ. Now for young people, after all this, to remain unmindful of God, and go on in the ways of vanity and sin, is aggravatedly vile. They despise the kindness and love of God our Saviour, and show themselves obstinate, in their aversion to him. They cast contempt upon the dying love of Christ, tread under foot his blood, and undervalue and slight all his grace. This is to be in a dreadful degree *evil and unthankful.*

6. They are under great obligations to early piety, arising from their having been, in their infancy, *dedicated to God in baptism.*

Baptism is not the instituted means of regeneration, as some pretend; nor do we see any such effect usually following upon it. But baptism signifies our engagement to be the Lord's, and lays us under obligations to be his. Young people, your parents, when they made a profession of religion, gave themselves and all they had, or ever should have, to the Lord: so that you were virtually given to God before you were born. And as soon as you were born, they brought you in their arms, and presented you before God and his people, and by their practice implicitly said, "whereas heretofore, when we made a profession of religion, we gave ourselves and all we had, or ever should have, to the Lord; and whereas God has now given us this child, we now come and present ourselves and our child before God and his people, that we may dedicate it to God in baptism, according to divine appointment: and we do hereby lay our child under the strongest bonds we can to the Lord, and enter into covenant to bring it up in his fear: we put our child also under the care and watch of the church, that they may stand engaged for its good education. And all this to the intent our child may be preserved from the ways of vanity and sin, and

be trained up for God." And hereupon in solemn prayer the case was spread before the Lord, and then you was baptised *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:* and so consecrated to the living God.

Remember the solemn season, O parents, when you did thus dedicate your children to the Lord. And know it, *the vows of God are upon you,* and see to it you be faithful.—Their blood will be required at your hands, if they perish through your neglect: and God will treat you as covenant-breakers. Have you told them how you gave them to the Lord; and what obligations they are under to be his? Have you often taken them alone, and with tears, tenderness, and love, laboured to impress the great things of God and religion upon their hearts? Have you taught them to pray in secret, to seek God while they are young; and by pious counsels and good examples, been labouring every day to train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? Remember, this is your duty, and thus did you covenant and promise to do, *before God, angels, and men!*

And to this church of Christ, suffer me also just to say, all baptised persons are under your watch and care; and you stand bound in the sight of God for their good education. You are Christ's professed friends, and are the Lord's visible family in this place; and therefore all the children are put under your care, that they may be brought up for God. If parents be not faithful, it belongs to you to call them to an account. If children run in riot, it is your business to do all that in you lies to reform them. Christ has betrusted this with you, and expects your fidelity. Let me therefore beseech you, for Christ's sake, for your own sakes, and for the sake of the rising generation, that with one heart, and with one soul, you would exert yourselves to the utmost, to encourage and promote good family government, and the pious education of children. If any church neglects their duty in this matter, it will bring much guilt upon them, as covenant-breakers; and the blood of perishing souls will be required at their hands.

But to return.—See here, O *young people,* the goodness of Christ, the great head of the church, in making such provision

for your spiritual welfare, as soon as you were born. By his appointment you were brought into his visible family, there to be trained up for eternal glory. See here also the good will of your parents; they gave you to the Lord, and entered into covenant to bring you up in his fear, and laid you under the strongest bonds they could to be the Lord's. And what now is your proper duty? And what ought to be the temper of your minds? "I thank the God of heaven, (should every one of you be ready to say,) I thank the great Redeemer, for this merciful and gracious constitution. And I thank my parents for what they have done. I approve of it with all my heart; I consent to it; I rejoice in it; I would be the Lord's: I will ratify and confirm that covenant; I will give myself to God, and join myself to his people, and bid a final adieu to my vain and sinful companions, and to all the ways of vanity and sin. I will avouch the Lord Jehovah to be my sovereign Lord and supreme good, through Jesus Christ; and give up myself to his service, to walk in all his ways, and keep all his commands, seeking his glory." This, O young people, is your duty, and this ought to be the temper of your minds; and this ought ye to do!

You cannot now therefore go on unmindful of God, in vanity and sin, at an easy and cheap rate. You cannot do it without treading under foot the goodness of Christ, and the good-will of your parents, and breaking your baptismal covenant. You cannot do it without practically forsaking the family of Christ, and the people of God, and joining yourselves to the family of satan. And if you do so, verily, as St. Paul said in a like case, *your circumcision is made uncircumcision:* you renounce your baptism, and practically turn apostates: and will be treated as such, in that great day when Christ shall come to judge the world.

7. Young people are under special obligations to early piety, because youth *is the time when persons usually have most of the strivings of God's holy Spirit.*

It has been commonly observed by those that have had much to do with souls, that mankind have usually more of the strivings of the spirit, when they are young, than after they are grown old in years and old in sin. And it is no wonder,

if persons when they are young *grieve the holy Spirit* time after time, that they are gradually very much left and forsaken of God, and suffered to go on unmolested in their way to ruin; in after years, perhaps there are very few young people, but what are now and then met with, stopped in their career of vanity and sin, and brought to some serious thoughts of the state of their souls, and of their way of living, and to think what is like to be their end.

And this, O young people, I doubt not, has been the case with one and another of you, time after time. You have been awakened to some sense of your guilt and danger, and to serious thoughts of another world. At such times you have gone alone, and sat down solitary, and been ready to say, "alas, what a wretch I am! What a dreadful life do I live! What a dreadful state am I in! And what will be my end!" At such seasons you think of your sins and vain courses, with a heavy heart: you think of your frolics and merry-meetings with regret; and are ready to say, "I shall certainly perish at last, if I go on in this way." Perhaps you have sometimes terrible apprehensions of death and judgment; and imagine how you will feel, when the Judge shall say, *Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.* It may be, you sometimes with fear and trembling think of *the lake of fire and brimstone,* of the wrath of a provoked God, of the anguish of a condemning conscience, of the eternity of hell torments, and the dreadfulness of the misery and despair of the damned: and are ready to say, "I am a fool to live as I do, I am distracted to go on any further; I will never do any more as I have done." And here you reckon up your beloved ways of sin, and form resolutions to leave them. "Farewell to my vain frolics, and farewell to my vain companions: I will now begin to be serious, and have done with my light, airy, unprofitable way of living; and for time to come, I will be constant in secret prayer; those leisure hours I used to spend abroad among vain companions, I will devote to reading the bible, and good books, to meditation, and prayer." And thus you reflect, and thus you mourn, and thus you resolve upon a new life.

But perhaps in a few days afterwards your sense of things begins to wear off, you grow unwatchful, and a careless vain temper by little and little returns upon you; your vain companions make you a visit, they invite you to some recreations, and you have a mind to go. It may be, on this occasion, your conscience reproves and warns you; telling you how things looked to you at such a time, and at such a place, and what solemn resolutions you made; and goes on to say, "If you do go with these, your old companions in sin, you will get to be as vain and careless as ever; you will presently have done with secret prayer, and with reading the bible and good books: you will be just where you was, or rather in a much worse condition, and more unlikely ever to come to God: you know, that vain company has always been of hurtful tendency: and many a time has put an end to hopeful beginnings: and therefore you must not go." But when your conscience has been thus dealing with you, you have replied in some such foolish and self-flattering manner as this: "pray, let me go this once; I will be upon my guard, and behave seriously and civilly; so I hope it will do me no hurt: and I will come home in season, and not neglect my prayers." Thus you have quieted your conscience, and have gone with enticing companions: and so all your concern for your soul has gradually worn off; you have returned to folly, and have got as good a heart for vanity as ever; but secret prayer is now left off, and your bible and good books are all now neglected. Much so, perhaps, it has been with some of you, time after time.

And thus, as it is God's usual way, time after time, to meet with young persons, and awaken them, and try them, to see if they will return to the Lord; so, after a while, the spirit of God being often grieved, their resolutions broken, the dictates of their consciences not obeyed; God begins to leave them: they grow more secure and hardened, and almost forget that they ever had any serious thoughts. And now they lay the reins loose, and give themselves a full indulgence; they spend their younger days in pride and wantonness, and their riper years in worldliness, and in contention; in family-contentions, between the husband and the wife; in neigh-

bour-contentions, in society-contentions: and at last they go down to the dead, and to hell. No doubt there are now thousands and millions in hell, who went thither in this very road.

And shall not this melancholy view of things, O young people, awaken you to reflect more seriously on your way, and to change your course! Can you, will you, dare you, go on any longer, in the very face of your own consciences, against light and knowledge, and in spite of all the inward warnings of God! O, stop this day, and come to an unalterable determination, to go not one step further, in your foolish, vain, and sinful courses! Lest you, as it were, tire the patience of God, and he *swear in his wrath, that you shall never enter into his rest.* Read *Prov.* i. 24—31. and consider what you do.

8. Consider how many resolutions and solemn vows you have made to God, and to your own consciences, in days past, that you would forsake all the ways of vanity and sin, and that in good earnest you would make a business of religion. And think of it seriously, "that all these resolutions and vows are now as much binding in the sight of God, as ever they were, yea, as much as when they were newly made." You have broken them so often, perhaps, that they now seem to have lost all their binding nature, and you can now break them without horror. Once, perhaps, it seemed a dreadful thing, almost an unpardonable crime, to break your resolutions; but now you can do it, and never so much as reflect upon it. And yet those vows are as binding as ever. God remembers them all, and conscience will remember them all at the day of judgment, and in their light will your conduct be viewed. Think of it, O young man; think of it, O young woman; and tremble to see what you have been doing! And this day, even this hour, come to an unalterable determination, without any delay, by the help of God, to put all your old resolutions in practice.

9. Consider, if ever you intend to become religious, *now is your time, your best time, and it may be your only time.* It will be great stupidity and folly, to flatter yourselves with the notion of a better time hereafter. For by every day's delay,

your sins, your guilt, your hardness, and God's anger are increasing; and you ripening for ruin, and divine patience is growing weary. Youth is the best time to begin to seek after God. As hard as it is to bring yourselves to it now, yet it will be more difficult hereafter. As many temptations as you have now, yet you will have more, (though perhaps of another sort,) hereafter. And as little hope as there is now of your obtaining mercy, yet there will be less in years to come. So that now is your time, your best time, and it may be your only time; for unexpected death may stop your breath, and put an everlasting end to all your opportunities. O, therefore, delay not; but *remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth. While the evil days come not nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.*

Lastly; Let it be considered, *God claims a special propriety in your youthful days; as being the best, and most sprightly and active part of your lives.* This we may learn from some injunctions under the Jewish dispensation. For God always insisted upon it, that the first and best of every thing should be in a peculiar manner devoted to him; the first-born of man, and the first-born of beast, and the first-fruits of all the increase of the field, were to be the Lord's. And the very best of their herds and of their flocks, were to be offered in sacrifice to the Lord. It was an abomination to bring their blind, their lame, and their sick for an offering, to sacrifice unto the Lord a corrupt thing, while they reserved the best for themselves. And surely it was perfectly reasonable, that God, who is the first and the best of beings, should have the first and the best brought him in sacrifice. How directly contrary, therefore, to reason and Scripture, are the natural notions of young people, (yea, and of parents too,) who are ready to think, and say, "Certainly young people may be allowed some more liberty; there is no need that they should live by such strict rules; now is their time to take their pleasures; it is time enough for them to be serious and religious hereafter, when they are settled in the world." Just as if it was reasonable and fitting, in the nature of things, that the world, the flesh, and the devil, should have their first and best days; and that God should be turned off with hereafter, when

they are become too old for carnal delights, for sports, and frolics, and vanity. "And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and the sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy governor, will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts. Mal. i. 8.

That wretched plea, although it be a very common one, casts infinite contempt upon God: for it supposes, that young people have good reason for it, and may very warrantably please themselves, rather than God; may reasonably disobey his will, to have their own; may reasonably spend the best part of their lives in vanity and sin, and turn off God with an hereafter. Just as if themselves and their corruptions were more worthy of regard than the blessed God. It even supposes, that there is more benefit and comfort in vain company, than there is in communion with God; yea, that to love and serve God is a piece of mere drudgery, which cannot be borne with; but that the ways of sin are ways of liberty. Blush, O parents! Be ashamed, O children! To treat the Lord of glory, the delight of heaven, the joy of angels and saints, in such a contemptuous manner!

You that are in your youth, realize it, these are your best days, and therefore they must be the Lord's. These are your sprightly, active years, and therefore they must be devoted to him that made you, to serve him. Now your understanding is active, and your memory strong, your affections warm, and nature all alive. Now you are more free from worldly cares and incumbrances; now therefore you have many leisure hours for reading, meditation, and prayer; now you have, in a sense, nothing to do, but to seek after God. And surely now you must be the Lord's. These active powers, these blooming days, these pleasant years, these leisure hours, must all be consecrated to the Lord. Nor can you, without abominable sacrilege, spend them away in vanity and sin.

Thus, you lie under many and great obligations to early piety. Since God is what he is in himself; since you are rational creatures; since God has such an entire right to you, and authority over you, therefore you must be the LORD'S. And since Christ has died for sinners; since you have been given up to God in baptism through him; since God has ta-

ken so much pains with you by his spirit; since all the solemn vows you have made are still as binding as ever; and since this is your best time, yea, perhaps your only time, and a time that God claims a special propriety in; therefore you must be the Lord's, you must remember now your Creator in the days of your *youth*. There is no saying, Nay. The obligations are infinite, and you must be the LORD'S.

I proceed,

III. To offer some directions and motives, to assist and encourage young people to early piety, to *remember now their Creator in the days of their youth.*

In the first place, I begin with directions. And in general, I lay this down for a certain maxim, that "whatsoever has a natural tendency to make you unmindful of God, must be conscientiously avoided; and whatsoever has a natural tendency to beget and cherish a sense of God in your hearts, must be carefully practised." This the light of nature teaches; and so do the holy Scriptures. Heb. xii. 1. *Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us.* And, Eph. vi. 11. *Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand.* Read also ver. 12. to the 18th. See also 1 Cor. ix. 24—27. Eph. iv. 29, 30. Are you under infinite obligations to remember God? by consequence you are under infinite obligations to avoid every thing that has a natural tendency to make you unmindful of him; and under infinite obligations to practise all those means which have a natural tendency to beget and cherish a sense of God in your hearts. You are not, therefore, at liberty to choose whether you will follow good directions, or not; but are under infinite obligations to hearken and obey. And here,

1. I will point out some things that have *a natural tendency to make you unmindful of God;* which you must therefore industriously watch against and avoid.

Particularly,

1. *Indulging a vain, light, airy, jovial, wanton frame of spirit,* has a natural tendency to banish all sense of God from the heart; and therefore must be industriously and continually prayed, and watched, and laboured against. Young people are naturally inclined to such a temper, and it is their

common way to give it a liberal indulgence; whereby all serious thoughts of God and religion, of death and judgment, of heaven and hell, are banished from their minds. Therefore the apostle Paul directs Titus, to *exhort young men to be sober-minded.* Tit. ii. 6. A temper contrary to sober-mindedness will be your ruin, if it be not mortified. Youthful levity and wantonness of mind, will quench the motions of the holy Spirit; it will stifle convictions; it will make you prayerless, and heartless in duty; it will extinguish all solemn sense of the vows of God upon you, and bring all your good resolutions to nothing. You have found it to be so in days past, and will find it so again, if you do not change your course. In the first place, therefore, begin here; no longer indulge such an unserious light, and frothy temper of mind. Watch your heart, and strive to be serious: labour to get, and cherish a sense of God, and of things divine and eternal.

2. *Spending precious time in idleness,* is another thing of very bad tendency. Young people have many leisure hours lying upon their hands every week, which ought to be spent in reading, in meditation, and prayer: but it is the common way to spend them in nothing, or that which is worse than nothing. And hereby the world, the flesh, and the devil, have a continual advantage over them; by means of idleness they lie an open and easy prey to every temptation. O, young people, therefore make this your constant rule, to *employ all your leisure hours for the good of your souls,* as you will wish you had done when you come to die! See Eph. v. 15, 16. Read and apply the counsel there given you.

3. *Being much in vain company,* whether at home or abroad, is another thing of bad tendency. In such company there is nothing but foolish jesting, sportful, wanton, and unprofitable discourse at best; whereby the heart is rendered still more vain and unmindful of God, and indisposed to every thing that is serious and good. Nothing can therefore be done in religion, until vain company be entirely and for ever renounced. Leave such companions, therefore, you must; or be one of their companions in hell for ever. (See Psalm i. 1, 2. Rom. xiii. 13, 14. Eph. iv. 29, 30. and v. 4. 1 Pet. iv. 2, 3, 4, 5.) "He that walketh with the wise, shall be wise:

but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." O, then, *forsake the foolish, and live.* Seek some pious companion, and make such an one your friend, who will kindly instruct, advise, and admonish you, as there may be occasion. *For it is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools.* Eccl. vii. 5.

4. The gratifying of a favourite lust is of very dangerous tendency. Commonly there is some special beloved sin which lies in the way of young people's entering upon a religious life, and causes them to break a hundred good resolutions; often some secret sin, which it seems almost impossible to part with, and which they often fall into; whereby the Holy Spirit of God is grieved, conviction killed, conscience seared; and it is a wonder if it does not prove their final ruin. (Eph. v. 12.) Now when this is the case, there is nothing to be done to any purpose, until this Achan be slain. With fasting and prayer, therefore, seeking to God for his grace, engage in the conflict with your beloved sin, and never leave, until you have gotten the victory.

In the last place,

5. One of the greatest hinderances to serious piety among young people, in most towns and societies, is the habit of attending places of vain and fashionable amusements. This is a habit of long standing in the country; one generation after another has been trained up in the practice of it, whereby a spirit of seriousness and sobriety has been almost rooted out of the land, though a land once famous for religion, for sobriety and universal temperance. Indeed, a few years ago this practice was generally laid aside, throughout all the country. When *the Spirit from on high was poured out,* when the great things of the eternal world were realized, when conscience was enlightened, awakened, in multitudes; then this practice was judged to be sinful. And no doubt there were hundreds, yea, thousands and thousands of vows, and solemn resolutions made among young people in New-England, for ever to lay aside the pernicious and ensnaring practice of dancing. But since the spirit of God has withdrawn, and sinners have fallen asleep again, the old practice is set up anew. And here, in this school of debauchery and corrup-

tion, the rising generation are training up in pride and vanity, in wantonness and levity; if not in drunkenness, and luxury, in lasciviousness, in gaming, cursing, and swearing. In a word, a passion for vain amusements and parties of pleasure, has been heretofore one principal means of banishing almost all appearance of serious religion, from the generality of young people especially. And it has been so of late very evidently.

Nor is it any wonder; for this is its natural tendency. It tends to stifle all serious reflections, to cherish a vain and airy temper, and to promote an idle and dissolute course of life. It tends to draw off the heart from God, to loosen the thoughts from eternal concerns, and to give the mind a relish for nothing but carnal and sensual pleasures. It tends to make young people forget that they are sinners, and that they must die and come to judgment. It tends to make them neglect reading, meditation, and secret prayer; and to put off religion, until they are settled in the world, under the vain notion of their having a better time then. It tends to render them deaf to all the inward warnings of God's Spirit, and to the checks of their own consciences; and deaf to all the outward calls of the Gospel, and counsels of their ministers, their parents, and other spiritual friends: whereby all the means of grace become of no advantage to them. Or, if at any time a youth is met with by the Spirit of God, and awakened to some sense of his sin and guilt and danger; if a sermon reaches his conscience; if a fit of sickness, or the death of one of his companions, excites him to serious thoughts, and resolutions for a new life, a few amusements and gay parties will presently put an end to all. Hereby his serious impressions are worn off, and he quickly becomes as vain and thoughtless as ever.

These things being evident, vain amusements must therefore be for ever renounced, if you would *remember now your Creator in the days of your youth.* That you are under *infinite obligations* to have a sense of God on your hearts, and such a sense of God as will effectually divoree you from all other things, and influence you to be entirely devoted to him; this has been already proved. Hence, to forget God, and to

live unmindful of him, is *infinitely sinful.* To indulge yourselves, therefore, in what you know has a most natural tendency to make you do so, must be *infinitely sinful* too. But following those vain amusements, you know, is a thing that has such a tendency.

And since such is the nature of that custom, hence every time you go to such a place or party, you turn your back upon the God of heaven; and practically say, "I love *vain company*, more than I do communion with God." You turn your back upon a crucified Saviour, and upon all the grace of the Gospel; and practically say, "I do not care for the dying love of Christ, nor for the kind invitations of the Gospel: I have something else to do besides repenting and returning to God through Jesus Christ; I must have my pleasures first; Christ must wait until this season is over, until I get settled in the world; it will be time enough then to hearken to him." Thus you *make light* of the Gospel-invitation, like those in Matth. xxii. 5.—And what infinite contempt is herein cast upon God and Jesus Christ, and upon all the blessings purchased by his blood! But *wherefore do the wicked condemn God,* and *tread under foot the Son of his love!*

Who are you, and what are your circumstances, all this while? Why, you are fallen, guilty, polluted, condemned creatures; hanging over the grave and hell, by the brittle thread of a frail life; entirely at the mercy of an incensed Deity, in whose hand is your breath, and whom you are insulting and continually affronting to his face. And how does it look, to see condemned malefactors singing and dancing round the mouth of the pit, ready every moment to drop into hell; and kept out merely by the power and clemency of the God whom they despise, and whose redeeming grace they trample upon!—Think of this, O young man; think of this, O young woman; and tremble to see what your temper and conduct have been: and now, this day, come to an unalterable determination, for ever to renounce this vile practice. See your danger, break the snare, and escape; and *if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.*

Here, to fortify you against their enticement, I will briefly

consider and reply to some objections, that may be made against this part of my discourse.

OBJECTION. *But is there no recreation lawful for young people?*

ANS. 1. No recreation is lawful, that *naturally tends* to make them unmindful of God, and to indispose them for a life of the strictest piety. See Heb. xii. 1. No recreation is lawful, that tends only to please the flesh. See Rom. viii. 12, 13. And Chap xiii. 14. No recreation is lawful, that cannot be done to the glory of God. See 1 Pet. iv. 1—11. Vain amusements therefore are not lawful, *according to the Scriptures.*

2. The only design of recreation is to fit us the better to attend on the great duties of life. We were made for the service of God; and all our time, even quite all of it, is to be spent in doing his will. And every employment undertaken by us, ought to be with a view to the great end for which we were made. 1 Cor. x. 31. Such recreation, therefore, and so much of it as is necessary to fit us for the service of God, is lawful: but the rest, all the rest, is sinful. The practice of daneing, so prevalent among young people, like all other vain amusements, is sinful; for this is so far from having any tendency to fit them for the service of God, that it naturally tends to keep them secure in the service of sin.

3. No recreation is lawful, but that which, upon the whole, (all things considered,) is a duty. For all our time is to be entirely devoted to God, and all our powers employed in glorifying him. (1 Cor. vi. 20.) Every duty is to be gone about, out of love to God, in his fear and for his glory. But dancing is such a thing, in its nature and circumstances, that I do not see how it is possible young people should be influenced to it from love to God; or attend upon it in his fear, and with an eye to his glory. So far as these principles and views prevail in the heart, so far will the heart be entirely averse to dancing. And therefore this custom is not lawful, but forbidden, and to be shunned by all that would flee youthful lusts.

OBJ. *But Solomon says, there is a time for all things. Eccl.* iii. *And particularly, there is a time to dance.* ver. 4.

Ans. Yes, and he says too, *There is a time to be born*, and *a time to die*, ver. 2. Now do you think, that he means, there is a time when it is lawful to be born, and lawful to die? Surely no: but only, that there is a time when men are born, and a time when they do die. For neither our birth, nor death, come under the notion of lawful, or unlawful. So that, from the context, it is evident, that Solomon does not mean to say in the words objected, what is lawful, or unlawful: but only speaks of events happening, or that such and such things *do come to pass* [b]. And besides, that Solomon did not design to befriend dancing, is evident from Eccl. vii. 2—6.

Obj. Again it is pleaded, that holy David *danced before the ark.*

Ans. But can any be so weak as to think, that David was in a frolic at that time, a time of so great solemnity! No, he only expressed a religious pleasure, by *dancing before the Lord, and playing before the Lord.* 2 Sam. vi. 14. 21.

Obj. Nay, Christ himself *went to a wedding.*

Ans. Yes, but he did not go to a ball, nor do any thing a-kin to dancing. He abstained from all appearance of such an evil.

Obj. *When the prodigal son came home, there was music and dancing.*

Ans. Christ is there only showing what *joy there is in heaven over a sinner that repenteth*, by a similitude borrowed from the common custom of this world: but says nothing about the lawfulness of that custom among his disciples. So in the parable of the unjust steward, (in the next chapter, Luke xvi.) from his wicked policy, he takes occasion to recommend and inculcate spiritual wisdom. But we cannot from hence argue that Christ approved of the unrighteous conduct of that steward. And besides, Paul says expressly, *Be not conformed to this world.* Rom. xii. 2. And expressly forbids chambering and wantonness, Rom. xiii. 13. And an-

b "He doth not here speak of a time allowed by God, wherein all the following things may lawfully be done, which is wholly besides his scope and business, but only of a time fixed by God, in which they would or should be done." Pool's Annot. on the place.

other apostle says, *If any man is merry, let him sing psalms.* Jam. v. 13. And the whole tenour of the New Testament requires us, "to pray always, to rejoice in the Lord always, to give thanks to God for all things, to admonish one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to the Lord:" And this is the Christian way of expressing joy and gratitude. But dancing and vain merriment shows a Spirit entirely inconsistent with the true spirit of Christianity.

Obj. Yet the Scriptures no where forbid dancing.

Ans. But do not the Scriptures require us *to love God with all our heart and with all our strength?* And is not that inconsistent with a frolicsome spirit? Do not the Scriptures require us "to lay up our treasure in heaven, and to have our conversation in heaven, to set our affections on things that are above, to pray always and to rejoice in the Lord evermore?" And are not all these things inconsistent with a frolicsome spirit? And do not the Scriptures forbid us to be "carnally minded, to live after the flesh, to make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof?" &c. Do not the Scriptures require us to "crucify the flesh, to mortify our members which are upon the earth, to deny ourselves?" &c. Do they not require of young people in particular that they be sober, discreet, giving none occasion to *despise their youth?* And is not this inconsistent with a frolicsome spirit?

Besides, what do you think of those words of holy Job, (Chap. xxi. 11, &c.) where, giving the character of the wicked, he says, "Their children dance, they take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. Therefore they say unto God, depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the almighty, that we should serve him? And what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" First, they indulge themselves in carnal sports and pleasures; and then, as a natural consequence, *they say unto God, depart from us.* In Job's opinion this is the character of the wicked. And is not this very exactly the description of the gay and licentious in our days? Again, what think ye of that of the prophet, Isa. v. 11, 12. "Wo unto you that rise early in the morning, that ye may follow strong drink; that continue until night, until wine inflame

them. And the harp, and the vial, and the tabret, and the pipe, and wine, are in their feasts?" The consequence whereof is this, "But they regard not the work of the Lord, nor consider the operation of his hands!" And so again, *Amos* vi. 1—6. "Wo to them that are at ease in Zion; that put far away the evil day, that chaunt to the sound of the viol, that drink wine in bowls: (and what is the consequence?) But they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph." And thus, you see, the holy Scriptures set a life of carnal pleasure in just the same light that your faithful ministers do. In Scripture-account, it is the way of wicked men, of secure sinners, of those that are at ease in Zion; and it makes them bid God depart from them; it makes them *put far away the evil day*, and disregard all the judgments of God, and calamities of his church and people. And the holy Scriptures denounce an awful wo against all such.

Obj. "But if I renounce dancing and fashionable amusements, and bid farewell to my vain companions, and enter upon a life of serious and strict religion, I shall never be respected any more, nor take any more enjoyment of my life."

Ans. If your vain companions do not love you as they used to; yet they will fear and reverence you, as Herod did John the Baptist. And if you never have any more of your former carnal enjoyment, yet you may have spiritual consolation, which is infinitely better. But make the worst of things, and suppose you must part with every thing that is at present dear to you, what then! Is not this our Saviour's constant language, that *no man can be his disciple, unless he denies himself, takes up his cross, and follows him*; unless he heartily gives up his reputation and all carnal delights and pleasures, and is heartily willing to sacrifice every thing that is dear to him, even his very life, for Jesus Christ? But then Christ has assured such, that they shall have a *hundred-fold in the present world*, besides eternal life in the world to come. Bid farewell, therefore, to a life of sensual pleasure; and no more *turn aside after satan*; quit the tents of wickedness, and list under the banner of Jesus Christ. Let the world say what they will, follow ye the captain of our salvation; thus go victorious and triumphant to eternal glory.

By this time I suppose, my young friends, you are all rationally convinced, if you have suitably attended to what has been said, that it is your duty, without any more delay, entirely to change your careless vain way of living, and enter upon the great business of religion. Yea, some of you, I hope, have already determined to do so. Yet I fear there may be some among you, who are disposed to resist conviction, and harden your hearts, saying within yourselves some such words as these which follow.

Obj. "Well! others may do as they please, but for my part, I am resolved to take my pleasures, and live a merry life. Let ministers say what they list, I shall not regard it; if young people do not attend balls and theatres, and other parties of pleasure, they will do that which is as bad. And I hate your precise ways."

Ans. Just so Pharaoh of old impudently lifted up himself against the Almighty, and said, *Who is the Lord? I know not the Lord; nor will I obey him.* But wherein he exalted himself, God was above him; and thus spake the Lord to him, *For this very cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth,* Exod. ix. 16. So, thou stubborn and haughty wretch, gird up your loins, set your face like a flint, fight against heaven, as much as you please, and scorn to mind the authority of almighty God: but know it, from God almighty, the hot thunderbolts of his vengeance, if you repent not, will ere long smite your guilty soul down to hell. And the God, whom you now contemn, will get himself a great name in your eternal destruction. Nor are you strong and hardy enough to bear up under the wrath of the Lord almighty, and to endure the torments of *the lake of fire and brimstone.* Alas! your courage will fail you, when the unquenchable flames have kindled upon you, and the smoke of your torments shall ascend up for ever and ever. Then you will cry out in horror, in extreme anguish and despair; and will weep, and wail, and gnash your teeth. And it will add to your eternal torments, that this day you have been repeatedly warned, int he name of the living God, but hated instruction, and despised reproof.

You say, "Young people will do that which is as bad, if they do not attend balls and theatres." I only reply, then they will be as bad fools, and in the end shall they go to as bad a hell.

But, parents, (to turn myself to you in a short address,) will you stand by, and see your children drown themselves in perdition! Where are your former solemn engagements to God! Your children are the Lord's: you gave them to God in baptism. Remember the bonds you are under, and defer not to pay your vows. Where are your bowels of pity! Where is your parental authority! *Who is on the Lord's side! Who!* Their blood will be required at your hands, if through your neglect they run to ruin, and are finally lost. O, therefore, by your prayers and counsels, your example, and authority, do all you possibly can to restrain and reform them. Remember the heavy judgments Eli brought upon his family by *not restraining his children, when they made themselves vile.* And consider, that bringing up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, or teaching them to obey God, is a most effectual method to make them obedient to you, to train them up for being blessings in their place, and to render them great comforts to you in your old age; besides all the happy consequences that will accrue to them, in time and to eternity. Therefore resolve with good Joshua, that as for you and your house, you will serve the Lord.

Obj. *But what if our children should lay aside all obstinacy, and put on an obedient, dutiful air, and say,* "my father, my mother, I would by no means go contrary to you in this matter, nor would I willingly do any thing displeasing to God: I own that young people are too extravagant. But if dancing might be carried on civilly, and break up seasonably, what harm would there be in it? There is such a minister, and there is such a deacon, and there is such a *good man,* who let their children go to balls: and would you have us singular? And besides, if we never go abroad, we shall never know what genteel behaviour is, nor how to conduct ourselves in company." *And now what shall we say, or what shall we do, in such a case?*

Ans. Were they my children, I would in the first place,

with all the love and goodness of a tender parent, assure them that I did not desire to deprive them of any liberty, which, (all things considered,) would be reasonable, and for their good. And I would furnish them with such books as were proper, not only to instil religious sentiments into their hearts, but also to improve their minds. The money that others waste upon their childrens' pride and extravagancies, I would lay out in valuable books for them. And besides, I would use my best skill to teach them a decent, an amiable, and agreeable behaviour. I would also allow them, at proper times, to visit such of their companions as were discrete in their deportment, and religiously disposed; and I would teach them to be endearing in their carriage toward all. Nor do I doubt but that in this method of education, they would soon find such sensible advantages, as would effectually convince them that dancing is not at all needful to learn them polite behaviour, or to fit them for a most agreeable conversation among the better sort of men. But then, at the same time, I would tell them,

1. That as things are circumstanced, it is impossible to bring dancing under such regulations, as will prevent its tendency to be *greatly detrimental to a life of serious piety*. Because the generality of young people are so very vain, and extravagant, and ungovernable.

2. I would tell them, that if they should go to balls, then either they must, contrary to their own consciences, *do as others do*, or else, in being singular there, be more ridiculous: and that therefore, it is for their interest and reputation to keep away. And,

3. I would tell them, that if balls were brought under such regulations as aforesaid, it would be impossible to *maintain them:* for those that only mean to gratify the flesh, would not like them, nor go to them, much sooner than to a praying meeting. And others that only mean to use recreation in the *fear* of God and for *his glory*, that they may be the better fitted for the great duties of life; these would presently say, they do not want to dance, they had rather read and pray, and sing psalms together; and all with one consent would be for turning their frolics into meetings for religious exercises.

In the last place,

4. I would tell them, that ministers, and deacons, and such as we are ready to hope are *good men*, are not our rule: nor, will it be inquired at the day of judgment, whether you were no worse than the children of such and such men. But the question will be, were you really saints in Christ Jesus? And was your conversation such as becometh saints? Did you live like children of the light, and of the day; having no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness? Did you live soberly, not in chambering and wantonness, not in sport and vanity, not making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof, but putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, having the same mind in you as was in him, and imitating him in your whole temper and conduct? Did you live by the faith of the Son of God, and show your faith by your works? Or did you live like the children of this world, walking after your own lusts, in the way of your own hearts, and in the sight of your own eyes, even as others?

Thus in a kind, and rational, and Scriptural way, I would deal with them, and endeavour to afford them full conviction.

But I hasten,

2. *To point out*, very briefly, *some things which have a natural tendency, to beget and cherish a sense of God in the heart*: or to direct you to the means instituted by God for that purpose, and in the use of which, it pleases God, of his sovereign grace, and according to the good pleasure of his will, to grant the necessary influences of his holy Spirit for this blessed end.

Be much in reading the word of God, the holy bible, that best of books, that sacred treasure of divine knowledge. Spend many of your leisure hours in this profitable and delightful employment. And let your minds be always taken up with the great things therein revealed concerning God and Christ, and the holy Spirit: concerning the fall of man, and the way of recovery opened in the Gospel, the greatness of the salvation by Christ, your absolute need of it, and your obligations to Christ for it; concerning death and judgment, heaven and hell, and eternity: and while you read, labour for a realizing sense of those great truths. And in order to this be much in secret prayer, in close meditation, and im-

partial self-examination. Daily retire into your closet, and spend many an hour alone in these religious exercises. And maintain an everlasting watchfulness over your hearts to keep out vain thoughts, and to suppress all bad inclinations. Moreover, seek out a serious religious companion, and make such an one your friend, your monitor, and helper: and sometimes spend an hour with him, in serious discourse together. Get acquainted with your pastor, and freely open to him your spiritual concerns, entreating him to be your faithful guide. *Be swift to hear,* and *take heed how you hear,* that *the word preached* may *profit you.* And *children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right.* Diligently attend family-duties every day; and let the sabbath of the Lord be carefully observed by you. Be diligent in the use of all the means of grace. Be resolute, be engaged, let no time run to waste; exert yourselves to the utmost, in striving that you may enter in at the strait gate, and escape the wrath to come. And never rest in any thing short of a saving conversion to God, nor be content without an assurance of the divine favour, and a life of communion with the father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. In a word, never rest satisfied without obtaining the faith of God's elect, and such a holy heavenly temper of mind, as was described under the *first general head,* when I showed what is implied in remembering God.

Only let it be minded here, that I do not give you these directions, under a notion of putting you upon making amends to the law and justice of God for your past sins, by your repentance and reformation, and of recommending yourselves to the divine favour by any works of righteousness that you can do: nor under a notion of your having ability to renew your nature unto holiness, by the exertion of your own powers. No, but rather under a notion, that in the use of these means, you may come to be convinced, by the Spirit of God, of the insufficiency of your own righteousness, and to be made sensible of your spiritual impotency; and so be led to see your need of both *righteousness* and *strength* from Jesus Christ, the one Mediator and only Saviour; in whom all fulness dwells, to whom you must look, on whom you must trust, from whom you must derive all things, (John xv. 1—6.

Rom. x. 3, 4.) in the diligent and constant believing use of all the means of grace. But I must not enlarge.

In the second place, I am to offer some arguments or motives, to encourage and persuade young people to the pursuit of early piety. I have already shown the many and great obligations that lie upon you, to remember God, to have a sense of him on your hearts, even so as to be divorced from all other things, and entirely devoted to him. And have showed, that those obligations are absolutely binding, and of everlasting force. And so I have considered early piety as a matter of duty. But now I come to view the matter in a different light, to consider it as a point of prudence, a matter of interest and expediency. For it is not only your duty, O young people! early to devote yourselves to God, and to a life of strict piety; nor only a duty to which you are under infinite obligations; but it is also your wisdom, as it is for your interest; unspeakably for your advantage: more for your interest, than to be made worth thousands a year: more for your interest, than to be adopted into the family of a king; yea, more for your interest, than to be made lords of all this lower world. The service of God is certainly then your most reasonable duty.

Let it be particularly considered here,

1. *There is an unspeakable pleasure in religion itself*, antecedent to all other considerations; yea, *joy unspeakable and full of glory.* (1 Pet. i. 8.) A sinful state in Scripture-account is a state of death, but to be *spiritually minded* is *life and peace,* Rom. viii. 6. Yea, it is eternal life begun in the soul; it is the dawning of eternal glory. There is an unspeakable pleasure in seeing and knowing God to be just such an one as he is. An unspeakable pleasure in having a sense of God on the heart; of his all-seeing eye and all-governing hand, and of the infinite moral excellency of his nature, discovered in his moral government of the world, in the law and in the Gospel, in the nature of the first covenant and of the second. It is this that ravishes all the heavenly world, and makes them in ecstasy cry out, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty, the whole earth is full of thy glory,* (Isa. vi. 3. Rev. iv. 8.) this that will be the grand foundation of the blessedness angels and saints to all eternity. They shall see God, they

shall behold him in his glory, their hearts shall be everlastingly full of a sense of his transcendent beauty. (Mat. v. 8. John xvii. 3. 1 John iii. 1, 2.) The moral excellency of the divine nature gives a lustre to all the perfections of God, and speaks him infinitely glorious in being what he is; and here is the foundation of that infinite happiness he has in the enjoyment of himself. It is this, that fills all heaven with glory; and it is this, that makes a little heaven begin to dawn in the hearts of the godly here on earth. Indeed, a true spiritual sense of the *glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ,* is the beginning of heaven, and a foretaste of eternal happiness. And therefore in Scripture it is called eternal life. (John xvii. 3.) There is an unspeakable pleasure in being divorced from all other things, and in cleaving to that best of beings. It was so sweet to the Psalmist, that he cries out, *Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none on earth I desire besides thee,* Ps. lxxiii. 25. To love him, to delight in him, to live upon him, in this present evil world, is near a-kin to heaven. To be transformed into his image, is angelic blessedness: to be entirely devoted to him, to live a life of communion with him, and obedience to him, affords the most refined pleasure, *sweeter than the honey, yea, than the honey comb.* In a word, to have a spirit of pride, and vanity subdued in us, to have a spirit of worldliness and sensuality mortified, and to be strictly pious, is the happiest thing, that can possibly be had in this present world. *To be spiritually minded, is life and peace.* Leave therefore the cruel slavery of sin, the vile servitude of gratifying your corruptions, and no longer love death. But come now and be blessed; begin now to *enter into the joy of your Lord.* He that commits sin, is the servant of sin; but if you will be Christ's disciples, you shall be free indeed. And the glorious liberty of the sons of God is infinitely preferable to the licentious liberty of the children of this world. His yoke is easy, his burden is light: wisdom's ways are pleasant, and all her paths are peace. It is a thousand times sweeter, to mourn for sin, than to commit it; to be weaned from the world, than to possess it all; to have pride mortified, than to have it gratified; to enjoy communion with God, than to be in vain company; to forgive an

injury, than to revenge it; to love enemies, than to hate them. Yea, the seeming pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, carry a sting in them, and are so many keen torments, compared with the sweetness there is in the ways of God. All the generation of God's children can witness to the truth of these things. Therefore *remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth*; and so begin early to be happy. Besides,

2. *Great and many are the superadded privileges you will be entitled unto, if you indeed become religious betimes.* Your sins shall be forgiven for ever. God almighty will become your everlasting friend. You shall be taken into the family of God, and he will be your father: Christ will be your Saviour. The Holy Spirit will be your sanctifier. He that governs the whole world, will be your powerful guardian and protector. His eye will be over you for good. He will give you as much of the good things of this world as he thinks best; and will teach you to choose, that he should be your continual carver. He will make all things work together for your good: He will train you up for eternal glory; and at last bring you to his heavenly kingdom. Instead of being in the guilty, destitute, and forlorn state of nature, you shall even while in *this* world have a God to go to; an almighty all-sufficient, infinitely glorious, infinitely gracious God and Father, to go to; to go to under all spiritual distresses, and under all outward trials: to go to in sickness, and when you come to die. And after death, guardian angels will convey your souls to the world of the blessed. And Christ will own you as his members, before all the heavenly host. And God will openly acknowledge you for his children. All the inhabitants of heaven will congratulate your arrival there, and rejoice over you as joint-heirs with them of eternal glory. And here shall you be everlastingly and perfectly blessed, in the open vision and full fruition of God and the Lamb.

If therefore you desire heavenly blessedness, and have any relish for divine pleasure, if you have a heart to be divinely happy, in time and to eternity; O hearken, this day, to the counsel in our text, *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.*

But if you have no relish for spiritual and heavenly blessings, no regard to God, nor care of your souls, and cannot

be persuaded by any argument whatsoever; if you are entirely attached to the flesh and the world, and resolutely set in your ways of sin and vanity; see, hell is before you; understand what you do; and consider what will be your end!

Alas! such is the temper of mankind, that no arguments, as of themselves, will effectually divorce them from their lusts and turn them to God, and to real religion. Their *alienation from the life of God,* their enmity to his holy law and Gospel, is unconquerable, by any but a special divine influence, (Rom. viii. 7. 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7.) And since this is the case, it is infinitely fit, in the nature of things, that the great Governor of the world, if he does save any of this guilty rebellious race, should be at liberty to save whom he pleases. He has declared himself reconcilable to any that will return to him through Jesus Christ. But since none will be persuaded to this, since none will do this, if they can help it, he is certainly now at liberty; he may let sinners take their course and go on to perdition, if he pleases: or, *he may have mercy on whom he will have mercy.* O see your entire dependance on sovereign mercy for salvation; and be *looking diligently lest you fail of the grace of God,* by resisting the holy Spirit, and wilfully indulging unbelief and impenitence.

Young people fondly flatter themselves, that hereafter they shall have a better time, and then they will repent, then they will believe and obey the Gospel: and so they quiet their consciences for the present, and securely give way to delays from time to time. But, alas! they understand not what it means to *remember their Creator,* or become truly religious; nor how averse to it they are, as of themselves: nor do they consider, that *this very temper of mind,* which makes them unwilling to turn to God now, will always do so, if sovereign grace do not over-rule and prevent it. They imagine not how the case really stands; nor do they once glance at half the misery and danger attending their condition. But O the safety and blessedness of such as are early seized by divine grace, and brought to an early acquaintance with God in Christ! Who *know the things of their peace,* and *choose the good part;* who taste the sweetness of religion now, and are training up for eternal glory in the world to come! O the

happy condition such of you are in! Adore sovereign and distinguishing mercy; be deeply sensible of your obligations to God; sing the praises of redeeming love; and let all your days be devoted to him *who has called you by his grace, who hath delivered you from the power of darkness, and translated you into the kingdom of his dear Son; to whom be dominion and glory for ever.* AMEN.

THE GREAT EVIL OF SIN,

AS IT IS

COMMITTED AGAINST GOD.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED IN GOSHEN,

AT A MEETING OF THE CONSOCIATION OF LITCHFIELD COUNTY, IN SAID TOWN, MAY 30, 1753.

Numb. xiv. 9. Rebel ye not against the LORD.

Jer. xliv. 4. Oh, do not this abominable thing which I hate.

Mal. i. 14. I am a great KING, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name is DREADFUL among the heathen.

THE GREAT EVIL OF SIN,

AS COMMITTED AGAINST GOD.

PSAL. li. 4.

Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.

A SENSE of the great evil of sin, is essential to true repentance. It may be laid down as a general maxim, that "we cannot be suitably affected towards things, unless we see them as they are." Be they, on the one hand, ever so amiable and lovely, yet if their beauty is not seen, our hearts will be untouched. Even the infinite glory and excellence of GOD will not excite our esteem and love, if we have no sense of it: and let the moral beauty of the divine government be ever so great, although it may ravish the heavenly world who see it, yet we, while blind to it, shall be wholly unmoved. And be the Gospel-way of salvation, by free grace through Jesus Christ, ever so glorious, yet if the glories of it are not discerned, we may be far from admiring that divine constitution. So, on the other hand, let sin be ever so great an evil, yet if the great evil of it is not seen, we shall never be suitably affected towards it. Though it deserves to be hated ever so much, and though there be ever so great reason that we should be humbled and abased before God on the account of it, and mourn in the bitterness of our hearts for it, and be afraid of, and watch against it, as the greatest of evils; yet we shall not, unless it be seen as it is. Did we see it perfectly as it is, we should feel towards it perfectly as we ought: but unless we see it in some measure as it is, we shall feel towards it in no measure as we ought. So that a sense of the great evil of sin is plainly essential to true repentance. And, indeed, it is that from which repentance does nextly and most immediately take its rise. Love to God, faith in Christ, and hope in the mercy of God through him, prepare and dispose the heart to mourn for sin: but it is a

sense of the great evil of sin, which immediately affects the heart with sorrow, and humbles and abases the soul before the Lord. *My sin is ever before me; against thee have I sinned; thou art just, when thou speakest; have mercy upon me, O God.* So also St. Paul; *the law is spiritual; I am carnal, sold under sin; Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me*[a]*!*

Now,

The evil of sin arises from our obligations to do otherwise. And the more strongly we are obliged to do our duty, the more wicked is it in us to neglect it, or go contrary to it; and the more are we to blame; and the greater cause have we to be sorry and penitent.

We may be under various kinds of obligations to the practice of virtue. The honour and authority of God may oblige us; the welfare of our fellow-creatures may oblige us; and our own present and future happiness, may oblige us too: and therefore, we may be to blame, and have cause of repentance, on several accounts; and that, for the evil contained in one particular action, viewed in various respects, as it is; against God; our fellow-men; or our own interest, for this world and the next. And as is our sense of these things, so shall we be affected; i. e. we shall be sorry, and blame ourselves accordingly.

For let our obligations be ever so great; yet, if they are not seen, we shall not feel ourselves obliged, or look upon ourselves to blame, when we do wrong. And if ever we do blame ourselves at all, it will be only as we have gone contrary to such obligations as we are sensible of. Although we may be to blame, in other respects; yet we shall not blame ourselves. If we be to blame, for instance, for going contrary to the honour and authority of God; yet we shall not be disposed to blame ourselves on that account, unless we are sensible how that the honour and authority of God did oblige us. If we are sorry for what we have done, at any time, it will be only on such accounts, on which we see we have done wrong; and for such reasons, for which we see we ought to have done otherwise. Thus, if we see our

[a] Rom. vii. 14. 24.

great obligations to all holiness and righteousness, arising from the nature of God, and the reasonableness of his government, sin will accordingly appear as an infinite evil. But if we see ourselves under no obligations to God, but merely in way of gratitude for the kindnesses we have received, we shall feel to blame for our sins, *only* as they are instances of ingratitude. And in a word, in what respects soever we see ourselves obliged to do right, in those respects we shall feel ourselves to blame when we do wrong; and that in exact proportion to the weight with which a sense of our obligations lies on our spirits.

Hence,

Persons of an epicurean, and atheistical temper, who see themselves under no obligations to virtue, but merely from present self-interest, as a virtuous conduct tends to their present ease, profit, and honour; if they neglect their duty, and do wrong, they will blame themselves and be sorry, only because they have hurt themselves, and gone contrary to their own interest for this world. But if persons have some belief of a future state, and of the rewards and punishments of another life; they may be sorry for their sins, because by them they have forfeited heaven, and exposed themselves to hell. Or if they are under the influence of a compassionate temper, or of natural affection, and have injured a neighbour, a friend, or near relative; nature may prompt them, on that account, to be sorry. Or, if they firmly believe that God loves them, that Christ died for them, and that they are made heirs of eternal glory; and see that by their sins, they have been guilty of great ingratitude towards their almighty benefactor; they may, merely from natural gratitude, be sorry on that account. But if the great evil of sin, as it is AGAINST A GOD OF INFINITE GLORY, be not seen; they will not mourn for sin on that account. And yet if that which constitutes the great evil of sin is not seen; and sin is not hated and mourned for, upon the account of that which is its chief and principal malignity, our repentance is not genuine. It is of importance, therefore, that we know wherein the great evil of sin does really consist. For which purpose, let us attend to the words of our text, which contains the confession of a

true penitent, and exhibits the sentiments of a contrite heart. *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.*

Where, *observe*, 1. The particular sins referred to in these words, viz. murder and adultery. For this Psalm was composed after that Nathan the Prophet came to David, and reproved him, and denounced the judgments of God against him for those sins. And in this Psalm he expressly refers to the sin of murder, which he had been guilty of, v. 14. *Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God!* And it is supposed, he has reference to his other sin, in those words, v. 10. *Create in me a* CLEAN *heart, O God!* Now it is commonly and justly observed, that some sins are immediately committed against GOD, such as blasphemy, idolatry, &c. while other sins immediately respect our neighbour, and are injurious to him, as was David's murder and adultery. And yet, it seems, if we injure our neighbour, God is sinned against, and we are to blame principally on that account.

For, *observe*, 2. The great evil of David's sins, as set forth in his confession, and that which made them so exceeding heinous, was, that they were *committed against God. Against thee, thee only*, (thee chiefly and principally,) *have I sinned.* He had injured Uriah, and done wrong on that account: he had exposed himself to reproach among his subjects, and to anguish in his own heart, and was to blame for bringing so great a calamity on himself. But the greatness of his sin consisted in its being against God. And this seems to swallow up all his heart, and to overwhelm him with sorrow. *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.* And on this account, his sin appeared so great to him, that he was ready to justify God, in the dreadful sentence which God denounced against him, by Nathan the prophet: that his *wives should be defiled in the sight of the sun*, the *sword never depart from his house*, and that his *child should die*[b]. *Thou art just when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest*[c]. God had sent Nathan to charge home his sin and guilt upon him, and to tell him, that by what he had done he had *despised the Lord*, and *despised the commandment of the Lord*, and given occa-

b 2 Sam. xii. c Psalm li. 4.

sion to the *enemies of God to blaspheme*[d]. He had *despised the* LORD, and *despised the commandment of the* LORD; for God had said, *thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery;* for *I am the* LORD. But David had practically said, "I will commit adultery with Bathsheba, and gratify my lust, for all that God says: and I will murder her innocent husband Uriah, that I may hide my sin and shame by this wicked means, notwithstanding the divine prohibition. I do not care for God nor his law, or authority, so much, but that I will go through with my designs, and that, let come what will; for I value my lust more than God, and my reputation more than his honour; and therefore neither God, nor his law, authority, or honour, will I regard." This was the language of David's conduct! And this is the language of every sin! And thus he despised the commandment of God, and despised God himself. And this was, with good reason, charged home upon him, as the great evil of his sin; and for which God would severely punish him. And in a sense of this, with a broken heart, he cries out, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: wherefore thou art just when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest." And thus we see wherein the great evil of David's sins did consist, both in the sight of God, and to his own sense and apprehension after he was become a sincere penitent. And because every sin is as really committed against God as those were; and so what was true, in this case, will hold true in all other cases: therefore from the words we may make this doctrinal observation, viz.

DOCTRINE.

The great EVIL *of every* SIN *consists in this, that it is committed against* GOD.

Of every sin; not only of those which immediately respect God; as blasphemy, idolatry, sabbath-breaking, and the like; but also of those which immediately respect and injure ourselves or neighbours; as in this case of David.

d 2 Sam. xii. 9, 10. 14.

Their great evil; their great aggravation, that which above all things renders us to blame, and deserving of punishment for our sins, is, that they are against God. They may be against our own interest and honour in this world; and we may be to blame on that account. They may be against our welfare in the world to come; and we may be to blame on that account. They may be against our neighbour's good, for time, or for eternity, or both; and we may be to blame in that respect. But this is the great evil of sin, that it is against God.

Some assert, that our great obligation to virtue arises from its tendency to our own particular happiness: and that therefore the great evil of sin consists in its tendency to our own particular misery. Others maintain, that our great obligation to virtue arises from its tendency to promote the public good: and consequently the great evil of sin must consist in its tendency to injure the public. But the Scripture-scheme is different from both: for according to that, it seems, our great obligations to virtue must arise from God; because it is plain, in Scripture-account, the great evil of sin consists in its being against God. *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.*

Here I will attempt to show,

I. *How, and in what respect, sin is against* God.

II. *How great an evil it is on that account.*

III. *That this is the great evil of sin.*

Which heads being gone through, I shall offer some remarks, and then apply the whole to our own use.

I am to show,

I. *How, and in what respect, sin is against* God.

And here,

1. Sin *is contrary to the* nature *of God.* A sinful nature and a holy nature are in direct opposition; they are a perfect contrariety to each other. *The carnal mind is enmity against God* [e]. And sin is *that abominable thing which God's soul abhors* [f]. The *holy One of Israel,* is a Being of infinite understanding, and of perfect rectitude; and has a complete and comprehensive view of all things; and in all cases sees what is right, and fit, and beautiful to be done; how the DEI-

e Rom. viii. 7. f Jer. xliv. 4.

TY should be loved and honoured in the world which he has made; and how his creatures and subjects should live together in mutual love and benevolence, and not an unjust or cruel act be ever done throughout all his dominions. And as God sees what is right, and fit, and beautiful, and what is contrary; so he is accordingly affected towards things. *He loves righteousness, and hates iniquity*[g]. Let God be esteemed, reverenced, honoured, and obeyed: let love and good-will prevail, and be established among his subjects. Let every thing of a contrary savour be eternally banished his dominions; and God will be well pleased: but if any dishonour is done to the DEITY, or injury to our fellow-subjects, nothing can displease him more: for there is nothing he hates like sin: it is *the abominable thing which his soul hates.* Sin is more odious and detestable to him, than the most abominable thing on earth is to us. His aversion to it is vehement beyond the conception of any finite mind. His aversion to it is absolutely infinite. In this respect, therefore, sin is against God. It is a going directly contrary to his nature; and that in the most tender point; in a thing which comes nearest his heart. Nothing is so cross to him, nothing can disoblige him so much, or displease him, or grieve his heart, like this. As when a man's wife departs from him, and commits whoredom with another man, and breaks his heart by her ill carriage; so, says God, *I am broken with their whorish heart*[h]. And therefore, says he to his beloved people, *If ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but* WALK CONTRARY *unto me: then,* such a conduct would be so intolerably provoking, I will not, I cannot bear it, but *I will* WALK CONTRARY *unto you also in* FURY[i]. But a sinful conduct is called a walking

g Psalm xiv. 7.

h Ezek. vi. 9. *I am broken with their whorish heart.* From the covenant-relation between God and his people Israel, they are said to be *married unto him,* Jer. iii. 14. and hence, their going from God to idols is called whoredom. And to prefer an idol before the true God was a very provoking thing: therefore he says, *I am broken with their whorish heart.* But to prefer a vile lust before God seems to be in like manner provoking: it is a kind of spiritual idolatry. And yet this is done in every act of sin. No sin can be committed, but God is grieved. Eph. iv. 30.

i Lev. xxvi. 27, 28.

contrary to God, in Scripture, not only because it is thus in direct contrariety to the divine nature: but also because,

2. Sin *is against the* law, authority, and government of almighty GOD; for, as God hates sin with an infinite hatred; so he has with the utmost engagedness forbidden it: saying, *Cursed is every one that continues not in* ALL *things written in the book of the law, to do them*[k]. As Governor of the world, he sets up himself against sin; forbidding it with all his authority, and standing ready to punish it with all his power: and it is even one main end of his universal government, to discountenance and suppress it, throughout all his dominions.

No doubt, almighty GOD has right to govern the world: for originally he is absolute LORD of it; and by NATURE he is GOD MOST HIGH: and his GODHEAD, and his LORDSHIP, give him an undoubted right of government. And accordingly he has taken the throne, set himself up at the head of the universe, and undertaken the government of all things, and especially of the whole system of intelligences.——And,

No doubt, his government is WORTHY to be universally submitted unto: for it is all perfect and glorious. His laws and his dispensations are perfect in wisdom, rectitude, and goodness: and even as he himself is infinitely worthy of all love and veneration, so that his very Being affords infinite ground of joy among his creatures; even so his government is just like himself, and exhibits his very image, and is WORTHY universally to be rejoiced in. As it is written, *the Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice*[l].

Wherefore it is the fittest, and happiest thing in the world, to be, and do, just what he requires: and in his favour, and under the protection of his almighty arm, there must be the most absolute safety and security. So that it might reasonably have been expected, that all his subjects, throughout all his dominions, would join to say, LET GOD REIGN FOR EVER; and that they would all, with one heart, have exulted at the thought of being in subjection to such a KING.

But the sinner comes in, and dissents from his whole constitution, and that both in heart and life. "As for his law,"

k Gal. iii. 10. l Psalm xcvii. 1.

says he, "I do not like it, and will not obey it. As for his authority, I do not own it, and will not regard it. As for his universal government and glorious kingdom, it is not to my mind; I revolt; I will not have him *to reign over me*[m]. I can prescribe better rules to live by. I will not be dependent on him, nor in subjection to him." Thus the sinner revolts from his government, casts off his authority, breaks his law, and in the language of Scripture, *rebels against the Lord.* For, in Scripture, THIS is always considered as GOD'S WORLD; He our rightful LORD and KING; and all our duty is enjoined, and all sin is forbidden, by his AUTHORITY; and therefore every act of sin is considered as an act of *rebellion against the Lord,* and sinners have the character of *rebels*[n].

Now, inasmuch as God stands ready, at the head of the universe, to employ his infinite wisdom and almighty power, to discountenance all rebellions, and suppress and crush all obstinate rebels, and maintain good government throughout his dominions; so that, things being thus, there is no way for the obstinate rebel to escape an eternal overthrow, and everlasting shame and contempt: it is therefore in his heart, to wish the ALMIGHTY dethroned, his whole government overturned, and the sword of justice wrested from him. And had he sufficient power on his side, the latent temper of his heart would soon form into the terrible resolution; nor would he delay venturing on the dreadful attempt. Thus, sin is against the law, authority, and universal government of almighty GOD. Hence, God esteems the sinner as his enemy: and accordingly, sinners are called enemies to God in Scripture[o]. And are said to be even *enmity against him*[p]. *And*

m Luke xix. 14. *n* Deut. ix. 24. Ezek. xx. 8. 13. 21. *o* Rom. v. 10. Col. i. 21.

p Rom. viii. 7. *The carnal mind is enmity against God.* N. B. The apostle means here to give the character of every Christless sinner. For to be carnally minded, and to be in the flesh, is one and the same thing, in the language of the apostle; as is evident from ver. 8. But he looks upon all as *being in the flesh,* who *have not the Spirit of Christ dwelling* in them; as is plain from ver. 9. And those who *have not the Spirit of Christ, are none of his,* ver. 9. Every Christless sinner is therefore *in the flesh,* and at *enmity against God.* This is the doctrine of St. Paul. And just thus God looks upon every unregenerate sinner; however they look upon themselves. And no wonder; for let subjects conduct so towards an earthly prince, as all unregenerate sinners

they are not, says the apostle, *subject to the divine law, neither indeed can be.*

And this leads me to add, that,

3. Sin *is against the* Being *of God.* For, since God is at the head of the universe, (as was before said,) and unchangeably determined to maintain good government throughout all his dominions, and possessed of an almighty, irresistible power; there is no hope that the obstinate rebel should escape punishment *so long as God lives:* for so long as God lives, God will reign: and so long as God reigns supreme, obstinate rebels cannot escape: for God's determination to punish sin is immutable as his very being: and therefore, if God lives, the impenitent sinner must die. But those who are enemies to God, had rather there should be *no God,* than that themselves should be punished.

When once a creature has become so vile and impious, as to revolt from the government of the MOST HIGH, and begin rebellion, and enter the lists against the ALMIGHTY; if left to himself, without any restraint, or hope of mercy, (and we know God was not obliged to open a door of hope to any rebel in his dominions,) and if armed with sufficient power to bear down all before him, we may easily guess to what length he would carry things. The same disposition which moved him to begin rebellion, would naturally excite him to go on. By his first act of rebellion, his life and soul are for ever forfeited, according to law, and might justly have remained so. To repent, and undo what he had done, and humble himself, and sue for mercy, is what a sinner, in such a case, would never do. And as to the threatened punishment, he could never think of bearing that. He would venture upon the boldest and the most DREADFUL deeds, but that he would carry his point: deeds almost too dreadful to think of, and hardly fit to hint at. *Whosoever hateth his brother, is a murderer* [q], as it is written; and would therefore murder his brother, if left to his own heart, without any restraint, and having sufficient ability and opportunity in his

do towards God, and their prince would look upon them as enemies. Read Luke xix. 14. 27.

[q] 1 John iii. 15.

hands: what then would the wretch do, who hates his Maker, is an enemy to his God, and even enmity against him! We see how a guilty world has treated the SON *of God*; we see how they have treated the prophets and apostles[r]. And we may easily guess what dreadful work there would be, were the sinner an over-match for OMNIPOTENCY. Such is the inexpressible malignity of sin.

4. Sin *is against the* honour *of God.* It is even a despising the Lord, and a treating the MOST HIGH with contempt. All his perfections are despised; and considered as our Creator, Preserver, Governor, Redeemer, and the fountain of all good, he is despised by sin.

Hear the contemptuous language of the sinner's conduct: "God sees you, O sinner! and will you dare to transgress?" *Yes, his all-seeing eye shall not terrify me.* "God is near at hand! you are in his very presence! O sinner, will you venture to offend?" *Yes, God's presence shall not restrain me: I do not regard him so much.*—"But he is girt with strength, and hath an almighty arm; and you are but a worm, without strength, and can make no resistance! will you dare to provoke him to jealousy?" *Yes, I will do as I please, let him do his worst.* "But remember, he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity! Oh, therefore do not that abominable thing, which his soul hates!" "I care not what he loves, nor what he hates: I will please myself, let him take it as he will." "But consider, he is unchangeably determined to render to every one according to their deeds, to him that doeth evil, tribulation and wrath! and who can stand before him, when once he is angry! for our God is a consuming fire! Therefore, O sinner, forbear!" "No, I will not be restrained: I will gratify my lusts, at all adventures; for I regard not his threats." "But he is a Being of infinite goodness and mercy, patience and forbearance; and this should lead you to a better mind, O sinner!" "No, no, I despise his goodness, long-suffering, and forbearance; and I can be hard-hearted enough to go on, in spite of all his tender mercies." "But, O sinner, infinite wisdom pronounces, that this your way is your folly! and cries, Turn, O turn at my reproof! lest other-

r Matt. xxi. 33—39. Matt. xxiii. 29—37.

wise, ere long, I laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear comes! and will you not be dictated by the infinitely wise God?" "No, no, I know what is best for myself, and that better than he does; and I choose to be my own director, and to walk in my own ways." "But is he not the God that made you? Have not his hands formed you? Are you then your own? Are you not the Lord's? And ought you not therefore to be for him?" "I renounce the God that made me: I disown his right to me: I will not be for him, but for myself; for I will please myself, although he is grieved." "But consider, he has nourished and brought you up tenderly, as his own child; and fed and clothed you all your life long! and will you be more sottish than the ox and the ass?" "Yes, yes, after all, I will rebel against him."—"But how can you answer it? for he is your sovereign LORD and KING, you are under his authority, bound by his law, and accountable at his tribunal: and you know what threatenings he has given out. And now, if you have any regard for him, in any respect, how dare you go on?" "These things move me not. I will walk in the ways of my own heart: nor will I be controlled. I know not the Lord, nor will I obey him. And in the midst of all his thunders, I can be at ease in Zion, and chant to the sound of the viol." "But if you go on thus to despise the Lord, and to despise his law, authority, and government; what will be your end, O sinner! will not his wrath wax hot, and smoke against you, and consume you? Consider, therefore, how that after all this wickedness he offers to be reconciled through Jesus Christ; and invites you to repentance! TURN YE, TURN YE, WHY WILL YE DIE! and offers to be your God, and Father, and portion. And now, what answer do you make, O sinner!" "Why, look on us, and observe our conduct, and you and all the world may see, that we make light of it, and go our ways one to his farm, and another to his merchandize: whereby we plainly declare, that we despise the grace of the Gospel, and had rather have the world for our portion than God himself." Thus God, in every point of light, is disesteemed, disrespected, despised, and even treated with contempt in the common conduct of the sinner.

Any vile lust is preferred before all the fulness of God. Those things and ways which please the devil, God's inveterate enemy, and the most malicious and hateful being in the universe, are chosen, before those things and ways which please Jehovah, the greatest and best of Beings. His authority is trampled on, at whose presence the mountains melt, and the earth trembles. A worm of the dust sets up himself above the most high GOD, and his will above God's, and his interest above God's glory. If God offers heaven, sin despises it: if he threatens hell, sin disregards it: if he pleads the dying love of his SON, and the riches of his grace, and beseeches the sinner to be reconciled, sin slights it all: or if he commands men to do their duty to one another, sin regards it not: and that notwithstanding his right to us as his creatures, and authority over us as his subjects, and our obligations to him as the LORD OUR GOD. And thus the MOST HIGH is by worms of the dust treated with disrespect and contempt, and that to his face, and in the sight of the sun, in his own world, before his creatures, before his friends and enemies; tending to bring a public odium upon him and his ways, and to countenance and encourage rebellion throughout all his dominions, and sink him and his government into universal discredit, and bring an everlasting reproach upon his great name. Thus sin is against the honour of God.—And upon this view of things, may it not, in the

5th, and last place, justly be inquired, whether *sin be not against the* happiness *of* GOD, and whether *it does not open such a scene to his view, as naturally tends to* grieve and distress *such a Being as God is?* . . . . . .

To look down from heaven, the throne of his holiness and glory, upon this world, which he has made for himself; and survey all mankind, by nature his creatures, by right his subjects, designed to show forth his praise; and behold and see how they are revolted from his government, turned enemies to his majesty, and combined together in rebellion against his crown and dignity. They are set in a way which is not good, a way most contrary to his heart, full of impiety towards God, and injustice and cruelty towards one another. They disregard his laws, trample under foot his authority, despise

his goodness, and bid defiance to his vengeance. And they are so much against him; that were their influence and power sufficient to carry the point, they would soon take the field. The tendency of their common conduct is, to dethrone his majesty, to overturn his government of the universe, to bring him into the deepest contempt, and every thing that is right and good into the utmost disgrace, and to introduce disorder, confusion, and misery into his dominions, and rebellion which should spread like a contagious pestilence throughout all his kingdoms, until all his subjects should revolt, and all join to treat him with hatred and contempt, and even wish him not to be.

And if the sun in the *natural system* should be extinct, and all the light turned into darkness, and the whole natural word flung into the utmost confusion, every orb displaced, every thing turned upside down, it would not represent half so dreadful and distressing a scene, as would immediately be opened to view, could sin, without control, and with power irresistible, bear down all good and right before it, and rise up to all to that height of wickedness and ruin, to which it naturally tends. And would not such a moral system of intelligences exhibit to view a sight infinitely distressing to such a Being as God is, were it beyond his power and wisdom ever to regulate things? But to such a pass sin tends to bring the moral world.

So far as we are able to conceive, it seems essential to every intelligent being, to be liable to mental pain and distress, when they are crossed in the most tender point; when their nature and will, interest and honour, and every thing that is dear to them, is counteracted and despised, and, as it were, trampled under foot: and they in the mean time unable ever to regulate things. So it is evidently with mankind; with bad and good. Ahab took to his bed, and refused to eat, because Naboth denied him his *vineyard*[s]. Haman was grieved to the heart, because Mordecai would not *bow* to him[t]. The chief priests were in anguish, because the apostles preached Jesus, and the resurrection, and *filled Jerusalem with their doctrine*[u]. And *rivers of waters ran down*

s 1 Kings xxi. 4. t Esth. iii. 5. u Acts iv. 2. and v. 28.

David's eyes, because *men kept not God's law*; for that was a tender point with him [x]. And Jeremiah was ready to be so afflicted, if the Jews would not hearken to their duty, as *in secret places to weep for their pride* [y]. And so it was with the man Christ Jesus: he was grieved, and distressed at the *hardness of men's hearts* [z], and wept over the obstinate Jews [a].

And it is remarkable, that in Scripture, God is constantly represented as being affected in the same manner as men are; and such words and phrases are used, as denote painful and distressing sensations, in order to set forth how he is affected with the vile conduct of his creatures. He is said to be *grieved, wearied,* to be *made angry,* to be *provoked to wrath,* to be *vexed* [b]; *forty years long was I grieved with this generation,* says God, referring to the perverse conduct of the Israelites in the wilderness; *unto whom,* says he, *I sware in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest* [c]. And again, *I am broken with their whorish heart* [d]. *And I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves* [e]. All which are strong expressions, as used among men, to denote and set forth pain, and distress of heart, at the sight of something exceeding grievous.

Not that we are to suppose, that he, who is *over all, God blessed for ever,* is indeed really pained and distressed at the sight of the shocking conduct of his rebellious creatures.—For, although he has a full comprehensive view of the whole of it; yet, at the same time, he as plainly foresees to what a result and issue all things will finally be brought, by his infinite wisdom and almighty power: whereby his authority and government will be but the more established throughout all his dominions, and his name and his law but the more revered. And although a number of obstinate rebels will be eternally miserable, under the punishment they justly deserve; yet, in the whole, God will be more glorious, and perhaps the system more happy too, than if sin had never been permitted, and misery had been for ever unknown. Such power and authority has he over all things to order and over-rule, and such is his wisdom, and such his holiness, justice, and

x Psalm cxix. 136. *y* Jer. xiii. 17. *z* Mark iii. 5. *a* Luke xix. 41.
b Isai. lxiii. 10. *c* Psalm xcv. 10, 11. *d* Ezek. vi. 9. *e* Amos ii. 13.

goodness, that he both knows he can, and knows he will, finally bring good out of evil, light out of darkness, order out of disorder, and holiness, harmony, and peace, out of all the sin, confusion, and uproar; and all that has happened shall, through a long eternity, serve as a means, in the sight of all worlds, to establish his throne, confirm his government, make his law honourable, his justice appear tremendous, his grace glorious, and sin an exceeding great and dreadful evil.—Therefore he enjoys a perfect tranquillity, and an undisturbed felicity, although a world of wickedness lies open to his view, and millions of things are transacted, which have a natural tendency to grieve him, (and that not merely *forty years long*, but from age to age, ever since the world began,) to *weary him*; to *vex his holy Spirit*; to *break his heart*; to *press him as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.*

But no thanks to the sinner, that God is happy. He is no friend to God's felicity. His ways tend to grieve and distress the HOLY ONE of Israel; and that which is God's comfort is a terror to the sinner. He dreads the day when all things shall be set to rights: and when the ALMIGHTY will *ease himself of his adversaries*, and *avenge himself of his enemies*[f]. Thus we see how sin is *against* GOD: it is against his nature, law, authority, government, being, honour, happiness.

And now,

II. I am to show *how* GREAT *the evil of sin is on this account.* The evil of sin, as has been observed, arises from our obligations to do otherwise. And therefore, the greater our obligations are to God, the greater is the evil of sinning against him. Our obligations to love, honour, and obey God, originally arise from his worthiness to be loved, honoured, and obeyed by us. But he is infinitely worthy to be loved, honoured, and obeyed by us: therefore our obligations to do so are infinite: and so, to sin against him, must be esteemed an infinite evil.

But it is quite beyond our capacity to comprehend the vileness there is in treating God as the sinner does; unless we could, as he can, comprehend all his greatness and glory,

[f] Isai. i. 24.

and fully see all the grounds and reasons there are for us to love, reverence, and obey him, and feel all their binding force. God is fully conscious to himself, that he is infinitely worthy of all love, honour, and obedience, for what he is in himself: besides that he is the Maker and Lord of the universe; the maintainer and upholder of the world, and rightful king, and sovereign over all. He is fully conscious, there is infinite reason for us to rejoice in him, exult in his government, and be glad in his service; and that the contrary temper and conduct of his creatures, is infinitely unreasonable and wicked. And although we cannot comprehend the exceeding vileness of rising in rebellion against the MOST HIGH; yet we may be easily convinced, that it is an infinite evil. Yea, if we are but really convinced that God is infinitely great and glorious, it will be to us self-evident, that he is infinitely worthy of all love, honour, and obedience: and that consequently, to disesteem, despise, and disobey him, is infinitely vile. It is low and mean thoughts of God, which cause secure sinners to be insensible of the great evil of sin. Those heretics who deny the infinite evil of sin, do but, by the means, proclaim to the world their ignorance of the DEITY. Had not God known sin to be an infinite evil, he would never have threatened an infinite punishment, even the eternal pains of hell; where *the worm shall never die*, and the *fire shall never be quenched*[g]. And were not Christ, our compassionate Redeemer, sensible of the infinite evil of sin, he could never find it in his heart, at the day of judgment, to say to the wicked on his left hand, *Depart, ye cursed, into* EVERLASTING *fire*[h]. And were not all the hosts of heaven in the same sentiment, they would never join to say, *Hallelujah, salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments; Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth;* when they see *the smoke of their torments ascending for ever and ever*[i]. Yea, were not the punishment apprehended to be justly deserved, it could not answer any of the good ends of punishment in the moral world: but would for ever appear a great and dreadful blemish in the divine conduct, in the

g Mark ix. 44. 46. 48. h Mat. xxv. 41. i Rev. xix. 1—6.

sight of all intelligent beings. God himself could not approve of it, and would never do it. And therefore, notwithstanding it is so contrary to the natural sentiment of a heart secure in sin, yet we have sufficient matter of conviction, that there is really an infinite evil in sin, as it is against God. And when these heavens and this earth, which are now "kept in store, and reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men," shall all be in *a flame*, and *melt with fervent heat*, and the whole material system be dissolved and wrapped together, hurled into one general heap, (perhaps,) to be everlastingly a lake of fire and brimstone for the punishment of the ungodly [k]: I say, when God comes thus to *show his wrath, and make his power known in the destruction of the wicked* [l]; it will make all intelligent creatures, in earth and hell, effectually sensible what an evil sin is, and how God stands affected towards it [m]. This visible emblem of his wrath, this immense lake of fire and brimstone, will give an exact and infallible comment upon God's law, and show, beyond dispute, what the threatening means [n]: nor will it any more, throughout eternal ages, at all be doubted whether sin be an infinite evil.

And thus we have taken a brief and general view of the evil of sin, as it is against God. We might indeed here enter into a great variety of particulars, and largely show how sin, as it is against God, is aggravated on many accounts; not only considering merely what he is in himself, but the relation he stands in to us, and we to him, our dependance on him, his right to us, his authority over us, the greatness of redeeming love, the freeness of Gospel-grace, &c. And it might be distinctly considered, how amazingly vile it is for such as we be, to treat such a one as God is, in such sort, under such circumstances, and notwithstanding such additional bonds and obligations lying upon us. But I must omit this, and pass on,

III. To prove, that *the* GREAT EVIL *of sin, consists in* THIS, *that it is against* GOD. And this may easily appear. For a few words may soon make it evident, that although sin may really be a very great evil, as it is injurious to our fellow-men, or to ourselves; yet it is not so aggravated and heinous

k 2 Pet. iii. 5—12. *l* Rom. ix. 22. *m* Rom. ii. 5. *n* Gal. iii. 10.

by infinite odds, in these respects, as on account of its being against GOD. To injure our fellow-creatures is wrong, very wrong; but what is a worm of the dust, compared to the LIVING GOD? *If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him;* (and some recompense may be made,) *but if a man sin against the Lord, who will entreat for him?* (or make any atonement for his crime[o]?) Yea, if by some act of sin we could do the greatest injury to the whole creation; yet what is the whole creation compared with GOD, the ALMIGHTY CREATOR? It is all but as *a dust of the balance, or a drop of the bucket*[p]. We may ruin ourselves by sin; we may plunge ourselves headlong into destruction; but what are we, compared with the GREAT JEHOVAH? *Less than nothing, and vanity*[q]. And what is a guilty rebel worth, compared with the MAJESTY of HEAVEN? To rise up in rebellion against the GREAT GOD, go contrary to him, affront him, and treat him with contempt, is evidently the most wicked and heinous thing that possibly can be done. For here the GREATEST and BEST of Beings is insulted: yea, a BEING who is infinitely better than all other Beings put together. This is therefore the greatest evil there is in sin, by infinite odds.

And accordingly, thus we find the matter stands in Scripture-account. When men are guilty of such wicked deeds, as are injurious to themselves, or to their fellow-creatures; yet, by God, the righteous judge, they are blamed and punished for these sins, principally and chiefly, under the notion of their being committed *against the* LORD. Thus, when the Israelites were disheartened by the evil report of the spies, and refused to go up against the Canaanites, and talked of making captains, and *returning* to Egypt; although this conduct tended to disinherit themselves and their posterity of the land of Canaan for ever, yet it is not on this account, chiefly, that they were blamed, and so dreadfully punished; (nay, it is not so much as once mentioned, to aggravate their crime, or to show the justice of their punishment:) but it was all because they had *sinned against the* LORD. God had said, that he would drive out the nations before them: but they

o 1 Sam. ii. 25. p Isai. xl. 17. q Isai. xl 15.

would not believe him. God had commanded them to go up and take possession; but they would not obey him. They did not believe he would be as good as his word; they were afraid to run such a venture, as to trust his fidelity; they had rather rebel against his command, and return to Egypt. Wherefore God is represented as being greatly affronted and provoked, and as *swearing in his wrath*, that *they should never enter into his rest*[r]. *As truly as I live, saith the Lord, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness*[s]. But why was God so angry? *Because they had rebelled against the Lord*[t], *would not believe him*[u], nor *hearken to his voice*[x]: i. e. Not because their conduct was to their own damage, but because it offered an affront to God. Although it does not appear, that they had acted with a design to affront the ALMIGHTY; but rather from a principle of self-preservation. Just as sinners now a-days do, who turn their backs upon the heavenly Canaan, and lust after the leeks and onions of Egypt, the pleasures of sin; not with any design to affront God, but from self-love, and to gratify the desires of their hearts, all in pursuit of happiness. But yet really in fact they turn their backs upon the ALMIGHTY, and despise his commands; and for their offering this affront to the DEITY, damnation is threatened; and not so much because they go contrary to their own interest. And so again, there is the instance of David, who, it is plain, had no design to affront the MOST HIGH: but first he meant to gratify his lust with Uriah's wife; and afterwards contrived to save his credit by taking away Uriah's life: yet observe his charge and his doom, from the mouth of the Lord; "Because thou hast despised the Lord, and despised the commandment of the Lord, and given the enemies of the Lord occasion to blaspheme;" therefore so and so will I punish you[y]. Therefore says David to God, *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.* See also that confession in Daniel ix. 9—12. And that large representation of the nature of what passed between God and his people of old, and the reasons and grounds of the judgments inflicted upon them, in Ezek. xx. throughout. The Scrip-

r Psalm xcv. 11. s Numb. xiv. 28, 29. t ver. 9. u ver. 11. x ver. 22.
y 2 Sam. 12.

ture ever supposes, that all manner of sin, of what kind soever, is committed against the Lord, who is constantly considered as GOVERNOR of the world; and therefore the sinner is viewed as a *rebel*. But to *rebel against the Lord*, is to *despise him*, and to *despise his commands*, in Scripture-account. But to *despise* GOD MOST HIGH, is infinitely more vile, than to injure such worms of the dust as we mortals; because God is *infinitely greater and better* [z]. This therefore, is the *great evil in sin*, which is respected, when *temporal judgments* are threatened in the Old Testament, and when *eternal damnation* is threatened in the New: so that it is evidently a point, every where in the bible, taken for granted,

z *To despise God most high, is infinitely more vile than to injure such worms of the dust as we mortals; because God is infinitely greater and better.*—Therefore, 1. We are under infinite obligations to virtue, antecedent to any selfish considerations. And so, 2. There is an infinite evil in sin, over and above its natural tendency to promote the misery of ourselves or neighbours. And, consequently, 3. It deserves an infinite punishment to be inflicted over and above that pain which naturally results from it. And hence, 4. A rational account may be given of the *eternity of hell-torments*. And, 5. We may see why such an atonement for sin was needful, as the blood of the SON of GOD. And now also, 6. We may see the true nature of the *modern scheme of divinity*. They say, our great obligation to virtue arises from its tendency to make us happy; therefore, the great evil of sin consists in its tendency to make us miserable: and so sin is not an infinite evil; nor does it deserve an infinite punishment, nor will hell-torments be eternal: nor was an infinite satisfaction to divine justice needful; nor indeed, strictly speaking, any satisfaction to divine justice at all: So, no need of a GOD for our Redeemer: hence, Christ Jesus was but a mere man; and the Gospel, only the *religion of nature*, republished and reinforced, &c. &c. It is all because they know not the Lord. As it is written, *the fool saith in his heart, there is no God: corrupt are they*. For, having no sense of God upon their hearts, or of the importance of his honour and glory; they are prepared to imagine, that the happiness of the creature is of the greatest importance of any thing in heaven or earth. As though the creature were better than the Creator; which is to make a God of the creature; which prepares the way, in their scheme, to make a creature of GOD, i. e. of *Jesus Christ, who is over all GOD blessed for ever;* who yet, say they, is but a mere creature.—For valuing themselves so high, and GOD so low, hence they see but little or no evil in sin as it is *against God:* and so feel little or no want of a Redeemer, or of an atonement: so no need of a GOD, to interpose and die in their behalf; a mere creature might answer all the ends needful: therefore they are prepared to think Jesus Christ was no more: and it is not what the Scripture says, but what suits with their own notions, which to them, will appear true, or by them be believed.

that the great EVIL of sin consists in its being committed *against* GOD.

Having thus gone through with what was proposed, some remarks may be made, and then the whole be applied to our own use.

REMARK 1. *How* different *a thing is* SIN *from what an apostate rebellious world naturally imagine!* How blind are we naturally to the infinite greatness, majesty, and glory of GOD! How insensible of the honourableness of the almighty Lord of heaven and earth, and of his worthiness to be loved, honoured, and obeyed! If any of our fellow-mortals despise, affront, or injure us, they touch, as it were, the apple of our eye: but God may be abused, and we take little or no notice of it. A thousand times men break his laws, and a thousand times they despise and affront him by their sinful doings; while they are possessed of such a prodigious degree of stupidity, as not to pass a single thought upon it. And should any charge them with *despising the Lord*, there are many would be ready to say, (with those, Mal. 1. 6.) *Wherein have we despised him?* "You despise God in your closets, in your family worship, in your public worship, and at the Lord's table: and yet, O secure sinner, will you still say, *Wherein do I despise him?* You give your choicest affections to idols, and offer *the blind and the sick to the Lord*: yea, a *blind* and a *dead* heart. Is it not burdensome to maintain secret prayer? and more tedious to spend an hour alone with God, than a whole day with vain company? And is not this to despise the Lord? Offer such treatment to your companions: let them see that you are weary of their company; even then when you are waiting upon them with pretences of the greatest respect; and will they accept it at your hands? or be pleased with your conduct? Besides, you are continually despising God in your daily course, by a disposition to take greater delight in the things of the world, and in the way of sin, than in the ever blessed God: and by a disposition to love yourself more than him; and be more concerned for your honour and interest in the world, than for God's glory, and the interest of his Son's kingdom. And you despise the Lord, and despise the commandments of the Lord,

in every one of your thoughts, words, and actions, that are in any measure injurious to your fellow-creatures." But such is the sottishness of a secure sinner, that he scarce passes a single thought upon it, for days, and weeks, and months, and years, how the infinitely glorious and ever blessed GOD is by him continually affronted and despised.

But, turn the tables; let the secure sinner meet with abuses from his neighbours: let him be despised: let him be scorned: let even his inferiors treat him with contempt: let his name be cast out as evil by all men: let every man's hand be against him, to defraud him in their dealing with him, to disappoint him, and vex him: and now he will feel it; it will reach his heart; he will think of it night and day; aggravate it continually; and be ready to cry out, "Never was mortal abused as I am! Never were there such wicked doings in the world before!"

If GOD is despised, affronted, and abused; the sinner's heart is a *heart of stone*: he cannot feel it: for he does not care for God. But let it come to his own case; and his heart is a *heart of flesh*, very tender; as tender as the apple of one's eye: every thing touches him to the quick: for he loves himself dearly. If God is abused and injured, an apostate world care little about it: but if themselves are wronged, it is highly resented. Hence, this is the doctrine of ungodly selfish hearts, viz. THE GREAT EVIL OF SIN CONSISTS IN ITS BEING AN INJURIOUS THING TO US. Nor, indeed, is it very strange that a rebellious world care so little for God's honour. For this is the nature and way of rebels in earthly kingdoms; when they have cast off their rightful sovereign, and turned enemies to him, they care not what becomes of him, nor how he is treated. Their only concern is about themselves, and to secure their own welfare. In order to which they may do many toilsome and heroic deeds, and call them by the name of virtue [a], which virtue of theirs they may

[a] *Call them by the name of VIRTUE.* When MILTON has represented satan, the mighty chief among the powers of darkness, as willing, at all adventures, to undertake a voyage from hell to earth, in order to seduce man, and find out for themselves a habitation more comfortable than that burning lake; he introduces all the *infernal crew*, as paying a public honour to his VIRTUE.

honour and reward; and labour to countenance and promote it; but it is all the while only to serve their own ends. And they are nevertheless a company of rebels, in the estimation of their rightful sovereign. The application is easy.

REM. 2. *How amazing is the* patience *of God, towards a rebellious guilty world! and how astonishing the divine goodness, which sends rain, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts*

"——————————— They rose:
"——————————— Towards him they bend
"With awful reverence prone; and as a god
"Extol him equal to the highest in heaven:
"Nor fail'd they to express how much they pais'd,
"That for the general safety he despis'd
"His own: (for neither do the spirits damn'd
"Lose all their *Virtue;* lest bad men should boast
"Their specious deeds on earth, which glory excites;
"Or close ambition varnish'd o'er with zeal.")

Milton, Paradise Lost, Book ii. lin. 575.

And in the same page, in very beautiful lines, he intimates, what indeed is agreeable to our SAVIOUR's words, Matt. xii. 25, 26. that there is a great appearance of love and good agreement among devils: the kingdoms of this world are *divided* against themselves; but satan's kingdom is not.—And elsewhere the following lines:

"O, shame to men! Devil with devil damn'd,
"Firm concord holds, men only disagree,
"Of creatures rational, though under hope
"Of heav'nly grace: and, God proclaiming peace,
"Yet live in hatred, enmity, and strife
"Among themselves, and levy cruel wars,
"Wasting the earth, each other to destroy:
"As if, (which might induce us to accord,)
"Man had not hellish foes enow besides,
"That, day and night, for his destruction wait."

Par. Lost. Book ii. l. 496.

And yet the little appearance of *public love*, and *public spirit*, there is among mankind, although not so well united among themselves as devils be, is by some writers wonderfully applauded, as *true virtue*, and used as an unanswerable argument, to prove that mankind naturally have, in a measure, that *moral image* of God, which it is acknowledged the devils have totally lost: and that, notwithstanding we are represented in Scripture as being *dead in sin*, (Eph. iii. 1.) *by nature children of wrath;* (ver. 3.) *enemies to God;* (Rom. v. 10.) *enmity against him.* (Rom. viii. 7.)

with food and gladness; when *hell is their proper place, and the pains of the damned their just desert!* God looks down from heaven upon the children of men, and beholds the work of his hands combined in rebellion against him, their rightful sovereign: contemning his nature and will, despising his law, and authority, and of a temper bad enough to dethrone him, and overturn his universal government, had they sufficient power on their side: and conscious to his own infinite glory, and to the reasonableness and excellency of his government, and the infinite obligations his creatures are under to him; he has an adequate idea of the infinite vileness of their temper and conduct, and of the infinite provocation they give him, immediately to come out against them: yet he stays his hand [b]: he holds back destruction: he waits upon a guilty world from age to age; and feeds and clothes the wretches that affront him to his face. But,

REM. 3. *How* dreadful *will the day of* wrath *be! and how* miserable *the state of the obstinate sinner! when God's patience shall be at an* end, *and his hand shall take hold on vengeance, and render a* recompense *to the wicked,* equal *to the infinite evil of their sins.* If one sin, and the least sin, has so great an evil in it, and deserves so great a punishment; how dreadful must their state be, who have committed hundreds, and thousands, and millions of sins, and sins of the largest size, wherein they have cast the greatest contempt on the MOST HIGH, millions of times over! Their torments must be, not only eternal, but exceeding intense and very dreadful. The least sin deserves eternal damnation [c]; every degree of guilt deserves a proportionable degree of punishment; the more guilty, the more miserable [d]: the torments of the damned will therefore be not only eternal in duration, but most dreadful in degree. Hence it is written, that God will *show*

b Yet he stays his hand. N. B. It is in Scripture, attributed to the GREATNESS *of* GOD'S *power,* that he is able to contain himself, and to keep back his hand from destroying the God-provoking sinner immediately. Numb. xiv. 17. And had he not a strength and fortitude of mind infinitely great, it would doubtless be beyond him to bear with mankind a minute longer. Such infinite provocations would be too much for any but an infinite patience.

c Gal. iii. 10. *d* Rom. ii. 6.

his wrath and make his power known in their destruction [e]. His power was made known in creating the heavens and the earth: and by the same power these heavens and earth, which are now *kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men*; I say, by the same power, which first created them, they shall at last be *dissolved, burnt up, melted*; and so be turned into a *lake of fire and brimstone*: and when *the heavens shall pass away with a great noise*, all in a flame, and the whole material universe be hurled together in one general heap, then his *power will be made known* [f]. And then he will *show his wrath*. Now God is insulted and despised by worms of the dust; and yet is very bountiful to his enemies, and seems to take no notice of their affronts. As it is written, *these things hast thou done, and I kept silence* [g]. For now is the time for patience to reign: but when the *day of wrath* comes [h], God will let all the world see and know, how infinitely vile it is for worms to rise in rebellion against the MOST HIGH. When the heavens begin to be on fire, and the *elements to melt with fervent heat*, a guilty world will begin effectually to be roused to a sense of what they have done. Now God will show his wrath; and now a rebellious world will feel their guilt.

REM. 4. *How far beyond the capacity of any finite creature is it to make* amends *to God for the least sin, which casts such an infinite contempt upon the Most High!* A worm may rise in rebellion against the great Jehovah, and may despise God, and despise the commandments of God, and make a light matter of it: but if he would give "thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil," to make amends for his crime, it would not answer. Yea, if he would give "his first-born for his transgression, and the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul," it would not avail. It is easy, for a haughty worm to despise the majesty of heaven: but it is beyond the reach of all created nature, to make a proper amends to God for such an injury. It is, even between man and man, easier to do wrong, than to undo it: but it is clean beyond the whole creation, to make amends to God for the least sin. For it requires an infinite atonement: but if all finite crea-

e Rom. ix. 22. f 2 Pet. iii. 7. 10. 12. g Psalm l. 21. h Rom. ii. 5.

tures in heaven and earth should join together to do and suffer their utmost, it would not amount to any thing infinite. And besides, what can a creature do towards making the least degree of atonement for sin? For, what he does, must either be what God requires, or what God does not require. If it be what God does not require, God will not accept of it; for there is no virtue in it: and if it be no more than what God requires, it is no more than his duty. And his paying a present debt, cannot atone for a fault that is past. The creature is not his own, he wholly belongs to God, and all that he hath; he has nothing therefore to give to God, but what is his own already. If he gives himself to God, wholly to God, it is the most that he can do: and yet he was wholly the Lord's before. It is beyond the capacity of the creature, therefore, to make the least degree of atonement for sin. He may justly lie under the whole guilt, and be exposed to the whole punishment of it, notwithstanding the utmost he can do. If ever he is saved, therefore, it must be by free grace through Jesus Christ.

REM. 5. *How absolutely necessary was it that our* REDEEMER *should be* GOD! For otherwise, he could have nothing properly his own; and so nothing to offer to make atonement. But being by nature GOD, he is now naturally his own; and so may offer to God that which is his own, and that which is of infinite worth too. A being of infinite dignity can make an infinite atonement. And such an atonement it was that we needed. Without such an atonement, we must have perished. Therefore, *God purchased his church with his own blood*[i].

REM. 6. *How great is the* goodness *of God, that he could find it in his heart, to give his only begotten* SON *to* die *for such an apostate, rebellious, guilty race!* A race, which had treated him so vilely, that in honour he could not pardon them; the honour of himself, of his holiness and justice, of his law, and government, and sacred authority, would not allow of their being pardoned; unless *his own Son*, equal to himself in power and glory, were *set forth to be a propitiation for sin*[k]. A race, that are habitually inclined to des-

i Acts xx. 28. *k* Rom. iii. 25, 26.

pise him, cast off his government, walk contrary to him; and who, were they able, would soon join in the most impious attempt against his crown and glorious dignity. O! that he could find in his heart to love and pity them; and this, to so great a degree, as to give his *only begotten* SON to die in their stead; and now, through him, offer to be reconciled, and invite them to return, and tender them pardon, peace, and eternal life; this is the *most astonishing goodness!*

APPLICATION.

Now, are you convinced of these truths? Do you look upon sin in this light? Are you sensible, that all sin is thus against God, against his nature, law, authority, honour, &c.? Do you know, that this is God's world? That you are God's creatures and subjects? That he is your Lord and Owner? That he has an entire right to you, and an absolute authority over you? That you are entirely dependent upon him, infinitely indebted to him, absolutely under his government? And do you know, that the LORD your GOD is a GREAT GOD, and a GREAT KING, infinitely worthy of all love, honour, and obedience? And do you see what a great evil it is to rise in rebellion against the MOST HIGH, slight his authority, throw off his government, break his law, go contrary to him, do the abominable thing which his soul hates? Do you see what contempt this casts upon God? And how it tends to grieve his heart? For a worm to set up against the ALMIGHTY! For a creature, absolutely dependent, to turn his back upon his Creator, in whose hands his life and breath is, and whose are all his ways! To love sin more than the infinitely glorious God! To delight in earthly pleasures more than in the supreme fountain of all good! To be more concerned to please fellow-rebels and secure their favour, than to please the sovereign Lord of the universe, and secure his favour! Do you see the infinite malignity of such a conduct?

Oh sinner! if you never saw the *great evil* of SIN, you are to this day a stranger to God, and blind to the infinite beauty of his nature; and are to this day under the power of sin, and in an impenitent and unpardoned state. Never was a

sinner pardoned, while impenitent: never was a sinner truly penitent, while insensible of the great evil of sin: and never did a sinner see the great evil of sin, before he was first acquainted with the infinitely great and glorious God. You may indeed have been sorry for sin on other accounts; as, that you have exposed yourself to shame before men: or hurt your estate; or brought God's judgments upon you in this life; or exposed yourself to his judgments in the life to come: or, perhaps in times past, you have been greatly awakened and terrified, and then filled with joy, and even ravished, through a false, but confident persuasion your sins were pardoned; and in consequence of this, from natural gratitude, have felt real grief for your sins against God, considered merely as *your great benefactor*[l]. But if you never saw the great evil of sin, as it is against a God who is infinitely glorious in himself, your repentance was never genuine: and you are yet unpardoned.

Here it may be observed, that if ever men were thoroughly convinced of this great evil of sin, the conviction would be permanent and abiding. For where true grace is ever wrought in the heart, it will continue. The water that Christ gives will be in us a never-failing fountain, *a well of water springing up into everlasting life*[m]. Those, therefore, who were greatly terrified with their sin and guilt, some years ago, but have since learnt to make a light matter of sin, and can easily get quiet, and go on in their evil ways, they never truly saw the great evil of sin. Yea, I may add, that where true grace was ever wrought in the heart, it will not only continue, but increase; *like the mustard-seed, which grows into a tree*[n]: and so a sight and sense of the great evil of sin, will consequently increase and strengthen. For as men grow in the knowledge of God, and sense of his glory, and of their obligations, to him: so, proportionably, will they see more and more of the infinite evil there is in sin, as it is against him. The case therefore may soon be decided against all those who

l That those religious affections, which men may have towards God, considered merely under the notion of a benefactor, are not of the nature of saving grace, is evident from Job i. 9, 10, 11. and Mat. v. 46.

m John iv. 14. *n* Mat. xiii. 31, 32.

were once awakened and enlightened, but have since fallen away, and returned *with the dog to his vomit*, and with the *sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire*[o]. Their eyes never were truly opened: the heart of stone was never taken away: they never tasted the bitterness of sin to good purpose: and they are still in the *gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity*[p]; and must return to their awakenings and sorrows again, in this world, or in the world to come.

Answer me, to these six *questions*:

1. *Does God's* government *appear reasonable, and his* law *just?* Behold, and see how God governs the world; observe how he looks upon sin, and how he treats it. The sinning angels; for their first transgression, are turned out of heaven, and doomed to an eternal hell. Our fallen world too, but for the interposition of a Mediator, had sunk into eternal ruin. Every impenitent sinner will, at the day of judgment, be sentenced to depart to everlasting burnings. Now, does it appear reasonable that sin should be so severely punished? In heaven, they cry *Hallelujah! just and righteous are thy judgments, Lord God almighty!* But what is the language of your heart? Say, do you approve God's government? or be you an enemy to it? And, in all this, God does but proceed exactly according to LAW. For the law says, *cursed is every one that continues not in all things*[q]. Now, do you heartily approve the law as strictly just, that threatens eternal damnation for the least sin? Does sin appear so great an evil, as to deserve, in all reason and justice, to be so severely punished? Put it to your own case; and can you justify God and his law?

2. *Can you justify God in his present* dispensations *towards you?* How are you actually affected under those chastisements which God inflicts upon you for sin in this world? When God told David, that for his sins, his *wives should be defiled in the sight of the sun*, the *sword never depart from his house*, and his *child should die*[r]; penitent David says, *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: wherefore thou art just when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest.* And when afterwards he fled out

[o] 2 Pet. ii. 22. [p] Acts viii. 23. [q] Gal. iii. 13. [r] 2 Sam. xii.

of Jerusalem, from the face of Absalom, and Shimei cursed him, and said, *Come out, come out, thou bloody man!* broken-hearted David said, *the Lord hath bidden him, let him alone*[s]. For he plainly saw he deserved it at the hands of God. And is it the native language of your heart, when God lays his hand heavy upon you—*Righteous art thou, O Lord*[t]? Can you justify God in his dispensations towards you? God always in this world *punishes us far less than our iniquities deserve*[u]: and a sight of the great evil of sin will effectually make it appear so to us.

3. *Is it become natural to you, to look upon* hell *as your proper due, in such sort, as that every thing in your circumstances, wherein you are better off than the damned, appears as mere, pure mercy?* Are you so vile, and hell-deserving, in your own account? Do you appear so in your own eyes as in the sight of God? And do you accordingly attribute all you have, that is better than hell, to mere pure mercy? And go up and down the world, wondering at the goodness and patience of God! These things naturally arise from a sight of the great evil of sin.

4. *Do you deserve eternal damnation* now, *to your own sense and apprehension as much as ever you did?* Be it so that you have been brought to true repentance for your past sins, and have been sincerely devoted to God for these many years, and that you live a life of penitency and godly sorrow from day to day, and enjoy sweet communion with God, and a sense of his favour; and have good hopes of eternal life; yet, considered merely as in yourself, in strict justice, what do you deserve at the hands of God? Do you deserve hell still? And do you deserve it as much as ever you did? Or does it seem as if you had made some amends for the sins of former years, by your repentance and piety since? Or does your daily repentance make any amends to God for your daily short-comings? If you see the great evil of sin, it will be a clear case to you, that you never did, nor even can, make the least satisfaction to God, for the least sin. And therefore, instead of imagining that you deserve better at the hands of God than once you did, you will naturally see, that

s 2 Sam. xvi. Jer. xii. 1. t 2 Sam. xii. u Ezra ix. 13.

you grow more unworthy and ill-deserving. For, besides former transgressions, there are your daily short-comings, whereby you are continually meriting hell, without doing any thing, in the least measure, to make amends for what is past.

And now,

5. *Do all your* hopes *of finding mercy at last, take their rise, only and absolutely, from the free* grace *of God, through Christ, as revealed in the Gospel?* St. Paul was doubtless one of the holiest men that ever lived: yet no man seems so sensible of his own vileness, and need of Christ and free grace. The law, says he, *is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. Oh wretched man that I am*[x]*! I am less than the least of all saints*[y]. *By the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified*[z]. And he ever looks to be justified *by free grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*[a]. He is concerned, *to be found, not in himself, having on his own righteousness;* but *to be found in Christ, having on his righteousness*[b]. In a word, it was his character, *to worship God in the Spirit, to rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh*[c]. And this, which was his character, will be your nature, if you really see the great evil of sin.

6. *Is it become natural to you, to be* afraid of SIN, *of all sin as the greatest evil?* Are you afraid of secret, as well as open sins? Of sinful thoughts, as well as sinful actions? Of an ungracious, unholy frame of heart, as well as an unholy life? Are you afraid of having your heart turn away from God, the fountain of all good? Of losing a relish for secret prayer? Of wandering thoughts on the sabbath, and at sacrament? And are you afraid of whatsoever tends thereto; such as vain company, a merry way of living, love to the world, neglecting to watch the heart? Do you make conscience of walking with God, and of maintaining communion with the most high, in your closets, and families, and in the house of God? Or does not a round of duties, and form of religion, content you? Do you make conscience of loving your neighbour as yourself, and doing as you would

x Rom. vii. 14. 24. z Rom. iii. 20. b Phil. iii. 8, 9.
y Eph. iii. 8. a Rom. iii. 24. c Phil. iii. 3.

be done by; paying your debts, at the time agreed upon, and showing mercy to the poor? Do you make conscience of it, to bridle your tongue, to avoid tattling, and acting as busy-bodies in other men's matters? Do you make conscience of it, not to mispend your time in fruitless visits at taverns; in frolics, or in any other vain or unprofitable way: but to devote your time and all your talents, to the service of God? If you see your obligations to God, you will make conscience of pleasing him in all things. If you see the great evil of sin, you will be afraid of it in every shape. If it appears to you as the greatest of evils, you will be most afraid of it. You will be more afraid of sin, than of any worldly loss, or of any reproach, or shame, or suffering, or even of death itself. However it may be with a good man, for a fit, this is his habitual temper [d]. Indeed, in general, men are but little afraid of sin: they will go into the way of it: they will run into temptations, to taverns, to frolics, to vain company; and care but little or nothing about the love of God, and secret prayer: no, nor so much as whether they are honest in their dealings, and true to their promises: and yet, alas! are ready to imagine themselves to be the children of God.

However, an habitual sense of the great evil of sin, is so essential to vital piety, that without it, men, (let their past experiences and their present pretences be what they will,) are but mere hypocrites. Their repentance is counterfeit: their faith is false: their religion is all unsound. If you know not the great evil of sin, you know nothing, yet, as you ought to know. You are a stranger to God, ignorant of your own heart, and of the deplorable condition you are in, and to this day are unhumbled, impenitent, and unpardoned. Wherefore, consider these things, answer these questions; and see, and say, what is your state.

Oh! how doleful is the state of secure, Christless sinners! At enmity against God! Rebels against the majesty of heaven! Their frame of heart and manner of life, a continual despising the Lord! a grief to the Holy One of Israel! a constant provocation! And yet, alas! they know it not; nor does it once enter into their hearts: they go on at ease, a-

d Luke xiv. 26.

are merry, as though all were well. And little think what is just before them—The day of accounts drawing nigh; a day of darkness; of gloominess; and of thick darkness; and of great wrath!

Awake, O stupid sinner! Look round; see what you do; see where you are: and consider what will be the end. *Can your hands be strong, or your heart endure,* O guilty rebel, when GOD ALMIGHTY shall come forth to deal with you, according to your crimes!

Behold, now is a day of grace: and God is ready to be reconciled: a door of mercy is opened, by the blood of the Son of GOD: pardon and peace are proclaimed to a rebellious guilty world. *Repent, therefore, and be converted; that your sins may be blotted out.* But if *after your hardness and impenitent heart,* you will venture to go on, *treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath;* you are like to know it, to your everlasting sorrow, that it is a fearful and horrible thing, *to sin against the* LORD.

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THE END.

ADVERTISEMENT.

In accordance with the opinion of several Divines, words, which had become obsolete, have been changed, and sentences, evidently incorrect, have been corrected. In no instance, however, has the meaning of the author been varied. In addition to what was at first proposed, a complete Index to the whole work has been added. The work is executed in a style, which it is hoped will meet the approbation of the Christian public.

In this work, the writings of Dr. Bellamy are consolidated: writings, which have already done much, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, to detect and confound error, to discover and establish truth, to enlighten the understanding, to convince and humble the sinner, to enlarge the views, establish and comfort the hearts of the people of God, and to awaken them to active exertion in His cause. May the Spirit of grace enlighten the minds of those who peruse them, into a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus.

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ERRATA.

Volume 1, page 117, line 21 from top, for *delude*, read *deluded*.
296, line 7 from top, for *if*, read *is*.
Volume 2, page 7, line 13 from top, for *accountable*, read *unaccountable*.
9, line 15 from top, for *I am*, read *am I*.
57, line 8 from bottom, for *peaceable*, read *peccable*.
25, line 14 from top, before *evidences*, insert *no*.
251, line 7 from top, for *son of God*, read *sons of God*.
295, bottom line, for *is*, read *his*.
299, line 3 from top, for *no*, read *our*.
327, line 14 from top, for *thy* read *they*.
382, line 2 from bottom, for *Gospel*, read *law*.
399, note, line 2 from bottom, for *penitent*, read *impenitent*.
404, line 19 from top, insert *the*.
521, line 27 from top, for *as man*, read *that a man*.
Volume 3, page 142, line 17 from top, for *apposite*, read *opposite*.
247, line 22 from top, for *man*, read *men*.
382, line 6 from top, after *an*, insert *opinion*.